

Harry Potter and the Amulet of Time

Book 5 – Sirius and the Sphinx

Chapter One – A Brand New Year at Hogwarts

A shaft of fresh morning sunlight made its way through a small gap in the bed hangings, landing right in the centre of Harry Potter's face. With a frown and a squint, the young man slowly opened his eyes and scowled at the intrusive rays blinding him. With a sigh, he rolled over slightly, putting his back to the morning light, and looked down at the sleeping woman in his arms. With a smile, he remembered the day before, his wedding day, when he had finally made Ginny Weasley his wife. As he watched her sleep, he thought about the delicate woman he loved, and all that had happened to bring them to this point. After four years of grief and strife, he had finally found a measure of peace. All he wanted now was to put the past behind him and forge a future with his wife.

This wasn't possible, though. His son, Glenadade Potter, was in the present, a place he didn't belong. The younger man belonged in the distant past, a time long gone yet not so far away. If he was ever to go home, he would need to use the device that had brought so much pain to his father and his friends. The Amulet of Time, a magical artifact which transports people through time in one year journeys, forcing them into situations they had no control over. Harry knew this first hand, had personally seen the suffering such a device could bring, and yet still he was determined to see his son back to the place he belonged. He didn't know how long it would take, or what the future, or the past, may bring. Still, he had a strong sense of responsibility, and he couldn't abandon his son and send him into the unknown alone.

This time, though, it would all be different. The first trip had been unexpected and unplanned, leaving four schoolchildren in a foreign environment and left to fend for themselves. Harry was determined this time would be different. For one thing, they were all older and wiser this time, and more able to take care of themselves. They would also be taking more precautions. No more going off with only their trunks, their wits and their wands. There was no knowing what

century they would end up in, or if they would even reach Glen's time at all. They had to prepare for all eventualities.

One of the main precautions was to take more people this time. Harry had thought long and hard about this point, and knew that the more people they had, the safer they would be. A good selection of skills would be useful as well in case of any eventuality. Harry had already decided to ask Severus, knowing the man was feeling a little lost since his usefulness as a spy had expired. Sirius and Remus were also at a bit of a loose end, having avenged the wrongs done to them and their friends. Although they still had a lot to live for, it wasn't the same as the fight against Voldemort. Harry thought it would do them good to have a purpose again.

Harry was pulled from his contemplations by a stirring Ginny. As he turned to look at her, her eyelids fluttered open and she greeted him with a grin.

"Hi there," she said sleepily.

"Hi yourself. How do you feel?"

"Never better. What a night!"

Harry laughed and pulled her into a tender kiss. When he pulled away, he moved to get out of the bed.

"And where do you think *you're* going, *Mr.* Potter?" Ginny teased.

"Well, now that you mention it, *Mrs.* Potter, I don't see anything to get up for."

With a wolfish grin, Harry pulled his wife into his arms, absently pulling the curtain along and shutting out the irritating ray of light, before losing himself in the woman he loved.

Later that day, when the guests of Domus Corvus Corax were finally all awake and downstairs, Harry called a meeting in the ball room for his closest friends and family. He knew a lot of people were still caught up in the excitement of the wedding, but the issue of what to do with Glenadade was too important. It couldn't really be left any

longer. Today was September the first, the start of the new Hogwarts school year. The time travellers had all agreed to be present for the Sorting Ceremony, and Harry wanted the plans made and set in motion before they left for the school. It was a lot to organise, and he wasn't looking forward to it, but the sooner they started, the sooner they could leave and get the whole thing over with. They didn't know what time they would end up in, and the experience could be terrible, or enjoyable, but either way it was better to face it than put it off too long. After all, Glen had a destiny of his own, and a role to play in the war in his own time, and the sooner he returned the less the damage would be done to the time line. As soon as everyone had arrived, Harry cleared his throat and brought the meeting to order.

“ Thank you for coming, everyone. I know there has been a lot going on lately, and I'm sorry to disrupt everyone's day, but I believe there are a few final issues that need sorting out.”

“ This is about Glen, isn't it?” Hermione asked.

“ Yes, it is,” Harry said, nodding to his son, “ Glen needs to go back to his own time, and as soon as possible. We know the amulet will take us through time, it's a tried and tested method, however, we don't know where or when we'll end up. I refuse to let my son face it alone. As many of you will already know, I intend to go with him.”

There was an uproar from the Weasley family as Molly and Arthur began to strongly object. The twins and older brothers were shouting about Harry leaving their sister alone after they trusted him, and Sirius and Remus were protesting about missing more of Harry's life. Minh and Eustace were remaining quiet, showing their silent support for Harry's decision. After all, this was their great grandson they were talking about. Severus too was silent, but he had known about this from the beginning and had been expecting it. Eventually, Harry began to get annoyed, and sent sparks into the air to gain everyone's attention.

“ Look, my mind is made up, and nothing you can say will change my mind. Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, you don't have to worry about Ginny. She's agreed to come with me, and I'm not going to try and stop her. She's my wife, and I love her more than life itself. I won't let anything

happen to her. Mr. Weasley, Mrs. Weasley, I appreciate your concern, and I know you don't want Ginny to leave again after only a year being back here, but she's a grown woman and can make her own decisions."

The Weasley family deflated at Harry's words. They knew that the pair was old enough to make their own decisions, and it really wasn't up to them to try and stop them. If the Potters were all alright with the situation, then that was their choice. When they had settled down, two more of their number dropped an equally shocking bombshell.

"I'm going too," Ron said, "There's no way I'd let my sister and my best mate go on a trip like this without being there to watch their backs."

"That goes for me too," Hermione seconded, taking Ron's hand and giving it a strong squeeze.

Another round of protests began, but the other two time travellers managed to counter every argument without Harry and Ginny having to get involved. While the arguments were going on, Harry took to opportunity to study the other people at the table. Severus looked weary, as if life was getting him down, and while he tried not to show it, Harry could tell he was dreading his best friend leaving again, even though he would return to the present without any time having passed. It was still a matter of him missing out on the adventures. Harry made a note to mention his plans as soon as the shouting stopped.

Once everyone had calmed down, Ron and Hermione having made their points, Harry cleared his throat and regained everyone's attention.

"Alright, I know there are a lot of objections, and I want to set everyone's mind at ease. As you know, the last trip was sudden and unexpected, meaning we were literally thrown in at the deep end. This time will be a little different. We are no longer Hogwarts students. We have officially graduated, meaning we will no longer have the safety of the school to rely on. We will be out in the big wild world, and will have to make the best of the situation. As this is inevitable, I intend to plan the trip down to the finest points. We can base what we take with us on the things we found we needed in the past and lacked.

We will not be unprepared. Because this will take a lot of organising, I intend for us to leave on September 5th. Does anyone have any objections to this date?"

No one said anything, so Harry continued.

"As an extra precaution, I wanted to ask three adults to accompany us. I know that we are technically adults ourselves, but I feel it would be better if we had people with us who had more experience in the wider world. People older and wiser than we are. We may be older than we were when we arrived in the time of the founders, but we are far from worldly. Therefore, I would like to invite Severus, Sirius and Remus to join us on our travels."

This declaration was met by silence from everyone. This wasn't something they had discussed, and Ginny, Glen, Ron and Hermione were as confused as the invited parties themselves were. Severus, in a rare moment of openness, was gaping at the Boy-Who-Lived as if he had just told them Voldemort was alive and well and asking them all to join him in a round of tiddlywinks. Sirius and Remus were acting in much the same way, except the animagus was turning an interesting shade of puce.

I'm impressed, Dumbledore's voice commented in Harry's head, I don't think even I could have shocked Severus enough to make him dribble.

The stillness in the room was broken when Harry suddenly let out a light chuckle. He ignored the strange looks the others gave him and turned his attention back to his three friends.

"Well? Are you coming or not?" he asked with a mischievous smile.

The three spluttered and turned red at the scrutiny they were receiving from the others. Severus was the first to recover.

"Are you sure about this, Harry?" he asked, "I mean, can you really put up with us for several years away from Hogwarts?"

"It won't be a problem, Sev, as long as you can manage to get along with Siri and Remy. Of course, if you don't want to come..."

“ And give up the chance of discovering long forgotten potions? Never!” Severus said, a rare smile gracing his features.

“ Hey, there’s no way the greasy git’s going on an adventure without me there to annoy him every step of the way,” Sirius said in mock indignation.

“ So I can count you in, then?” Harry asked.

“ Of course, and Moony too. Where I go, he’ll be there, dogging my heels,” the older man said, giving his werewolf friend a wink. Remus nodded his confirmation, causing a broad smile to break out on Harry’s face.

“ Great, I’m glad that’s settled. I think that’s everything for now, as we need to head to the school soon. We have four days to make plans, so we should take this opportunity to enjoy the time we can spend with our loved ones. Meeting adjourned.”

When the party arrived in the Great Hall before the Welcome Feast, they were surprised to find a lot of guests sitting at the Head Table. All of the staff members were there, and sitting next to Heather Evans was Draco Malfoy. Harry was a little confused at his presence, and made his way over to his aunt, Glen following right behind him.

“ Hi, Heather,” he said when he reached the table. Heather turned from Draco and gave him a wide smile.

“ Harry, how’s it going? How’s Ginny?”

“ We’re both fine. We’ve spent the afternoon planning our next time travel trip.”

“ Of course, I hadn’t thought about that. You’ll have to take Glen home, I suppose,” she said.

“ That I do. Severus, Remus and Sirius are coming with us, as well as Ron, ‘Mione and Ginny.”

“ Wow, that’s quite a party! I hope everything goes well for you,” Heather told him, giving him a quick hug. Harry smiled back at her, and then turned to his ex-rival.

“ Malfoy. How’s it going?”

“ Not bad, Potter. I’ve been taken on as Heather’s apprentice, so I can take over the DADA position when she decides to go back to Canterbury.”

“ I’m pleased you found a niche. Good luck,” Harry said, holding out his hand. Draco eyed it for a moment before taking it in his firmly and shaking it.

“ Thanks, Potter, and good luck to you too. I think you’ll need it.”

“ True, but you know how it is, I’m the luckiest son of a bitch in the world,” Harry said with a grin. The exchange was interrupted by the bang of the doors and hundreds of students pouring into the Great Hall. Harry quickly took his place next to his son at the table, and watched as the students parted and headed for their House tables, chattering to their friends as they went, catching up on summer gossip. Once they were all seated, Professor Flitwick entered through the doors, a gaggle of first years following him nervously. Harry watched as a small girl grinned madly and waved frantically at the Head Table, Heather and Draco waving back at her. Harry recognised her as the Irish girl that had been staying with Heather at Christmas.

As the Sorting Hat sang its song, Harry thought back eight years to his own sorting. He remembered the horror he had felt when he had almost been sorted into Slytherin. In retrospect, he was glad he had chosen to experience all of the Houses. His time with the different types of people had rid him of any House prejudice he used to harbour. As the queue of first years began to dwindle, he perked up and paid attention as a familiar sounding name was called.

“ McCarthy, Evelyn.”

The young girl that was Draco’s friend moved excitedly to the sorting hat and dropped it on her head. After a few moments of indecision,

during which Heather and Draco were on the edges of their seats, the slit in the hat opened and called out its decision in a loud, clear voice.

“ RAVENCLAW!”

Evie removed the hat, grinned at her friends, and bounced over to the cheering Ravenclaw table. Heather and Draco were clapping madly, and Harry felt his heart swell at the sight. The odd pair had found comfort in each other, and in the young first year girl, and Harry was happy that after the things all three of them had been through, they had been able to make a family all of their own, and find the happiness they all deserved.

Chapter Two – Leaving...Again

As soon as the feast was over, the time travellers headed back to Domus Corvus Corax, leaving Sirius and Severus at Hogwarts to take care of their classes. Remus, no longer being a professor, and being at a bit of a loose end, followed the younger adults back to Harry's house. As Sirius and Severus would be busy teaching for the next few days, he thought it would be best to help with the preparations. Ideally, they would all be involved, but the other two had prior commitments, and six of them would surely be enough to plan for something like this.

After a refreshing sleep, the six occupants of the former Order headquarters met in the dining room for breakfast at a little after nine in the morning. After a delicious meal of fresh fruit and pastries, they adjourned to the library, where Harry called a mini meeting. Once they were all arranged around the fire, he cleared his throat and laid out a selection of plans on a conjured table.

“ Alright, everyone, I've been making a few plans, and I wanted to go over them with you all and see if you have any suggestions.”

“ Fire away,” Hermione said, taking Ron's hand in her own. Harry nodded and continued.

“ Well, I've not really planned in detail, but I have a few maps of the world at different periods in history, which we can adapt when we find out where we are. I have a few paragraphs of information on various time period of note, just in case. In the language section of the library, I found a book of translation spells, each used for different purposes. We can take the book with us, so we don't need to bother memorising all of the spells right away. We'll just look for the most appropriate one for the circumstances. I'll warn you, though, there are quite a few languages that cannot be understood or spoken with the help of charms, so if we encounter problems on that front, I don't know what we'll do. I've also come up with lists of things we'll need, things we'll have to learn, and problems we may encounter. Any questions?”

The others looked at him in stunned silence for several minutes before Glenadade finally regained to power of speech.

“Wow, Dad, you *have* been busy!”

The others laughed nervously, glad the tension had been broken. Harry grinned sheepishly at his son.

“Well, I thought it would be best to get it right this time. The first time travelling trip wasn’t too bad, but we would have found it a lot easier if it had been planned.”

“True, I mean, look at the cultural differences,” Ginny pointed out, “The tenth century was fun, but learning all of those formal dances was a nightmare!”

That gained a hearty laugh from the original time travellers, winning them a confused look from Remus and an offended glare from Glen.

“They’re not that bad!” the youngest Potter protested, “I never had any trouble with them! At least it shows a little culture and tradition. Here, you just flail around untidily. I mean, how embarrassing!”

That didn’t help matters, and soon the others were giggling helplessly, much to the consternation of Remus and Glen. Once they had calmed down, Ron cleared his throat and pointed out the obvious.

“What if we miss something?” he asked, “We can’t know where we’re going, and there is only so much you can learn from books, especially about the more ancient times. We’re bound to forget something that will turn out to be vital. For instance, have you considered Remus’ lycanthropy?”

That prompted a contemplative silence. Not even the werewolf himself had considered that point, causing the older man to frown in consternation.

“Ron has a point,” he conceded, “Maybe you should leave me behind...”

“Nonsense!” Harry exclaimed, “You’ll have two Potions Masters with you to brew the Wolfsbane potion for you. We need you on this trip! You’re like a second godfather to me, and our voice of reason. You’ll

bring balance to our group, and provide me with help when Sev and Siri are at each other's throats."

" I knew you had an ulterior motive!" Remus said with a laugh, " You do realise those two will fight the entire time, don't you?"

" Of course they will," Harry told him, " I'm counting on it. Hopefully by the end of it, they'll learn to work together and get along. Even if they hate each other now, by the time we get back they'll be the best of friends, I guarantee it."

Remus gave him a disbelieving look, as did Ron, Ginny and Hermione.

" You're nutters, mate," Ron said, " You remember what they were like at school, and things haven't improved over the last twenty years. What makes you think they'll ever get along?"

Harry gave them an impish smile.

" Did you think before we visited the seventies that I would ever get on with my greasy git of a Potions Master?" he retorted.

" Well, no..." Ron admitted.

" Trust me, guys," Harry said, " I know what I'm doing. It's traumatic and trying travelling through time. They'll either learn to work together, or they'll suffer even more. I know they're both too stubborn for their own good, but they'll learn eventually. After a few tight spots and hardships, they'll bond."

" If you say so, Harry," Remus said dubiously, " But I'll believe it when I see it."

Harry smiled back at him, before pulling his plans in front of him.

" Alright, a few points to discuss. Money, is first on my list. I think we should take plenty of gold with us. The further back we go, the more it will be worth, but we need to prepare for all eventualities. If we only end up a few years in the past on one of our later trips, our galleons won't be worth as much."

“ Good point,” Hermione acknowledged, “ If we end up only in the nineteen eighties, or early nineties, we’ll need enough to live on for a year. I think we should take a lot. We can always shrink it.”

“ We’ll have to shrink things anyway,” Ginny said, “ We may end up in a time where Hogwarts doesn’t exist, or Corvus Corax, so we’ll have to find another place to live. It could involve carrying our belongings around for a while. We don’t want things to be too bulky.”

“ So we need weightless charms, shrinking charms, and probably bottomless bags,” Ron said, noting the suggestions down on a piece of parchment.

“ Yes, they would all be useful. I also suggest tents,” Hermione said, and her boyfriend added them to the list.

“ We’ll need clothes, obviously, and basic essentials,” Glen added.

“ Both Muggle and magic,” Harry agreed with a nod.

“ What about communication?” Remus asked.

“ What do you mean?” Ron asked.

“ Well, floo powder, owls, that sort of thing.”

“ I think we should consider the consequences carefully before taking animals,” Hermione said, “ After all, they could get lost, or killed.”

“ Good point, ‘Mione. I want to take Simbi and Nirah, because they’ve proven themselves rather useful in the past. I’ll take Fawkes as well. He can look after himself without trouble, and we can use him for sending messages. I’ll leave Hedwig here, I think,” Harry said.

“ I’d better leave Pig,” Ron agreed, “ He’ll get lost in no time. Or eaten...”

“ The same goes for Crookshanks,” Hermione agreed.

The conversation continued on that vein for several hours more, and by the time the evening rolled around, the six felt they had planned for as many eventualities as they could possibly imagine.

The next couple of days were frantic for the travellers. They had planned as much as they could, their next task, though, was gathering everything they would need and packing. They had all met together the day after the planning session and informed Severus and Sirius about what they would need. On the Wednesday, the day before they were due to leave, they all spent the day at Diagon Alley, shopping for their trip. Sirius' and Severus' classes were being covered by Minerva and, of all people, Draco Malfoy. Even though he was only a sixth year, he was Heather's apprentice, and as such was the logical choice to take over Severus' classes. He had always been an excellent Potions student, and coped well with the lessons.

The shopping trip took a long time, with Harry and Ron returning to their vast vaults three times to replenish their supply of galleons. As it was Harry's idea to invite the others to accompany him into the past, he was paying for not only Glen and Ginny's things, but also Remus, Sirius and Severus' purchases. Ron was paying for his own things, as well as Hermione's, even though Harry had offered him the money. As the red head had pointed out, he had more money left than his best friend. After all, Harry had had years of funding not only the Potter family, but also the Order of the Phoenix, which had made quite a dent in his money.

Eventually, exhausted and several hundred galleons worse off, the group trudged back to Domus Corvus Corax to pack their new possessions. As soon as they entered, though, they were met by a sad looking Molly Weasley.

"There you all are," she said, pulling them all into hugs one at a time, much to the older men's embarrassment.

"Mum, what are you doing here?" Ron asked.

"I wanted to invite you all to dinner. After all, you'll be leaving us again tomorrow, and you'll want to see the family before you go," she said, tears shining in her eyes. The situation was obviously upsetting the Weasley matriarch. After all, she had missed the last years of her

youngest children's childhoods. To miss any more of their lives was tearing her apart.

"We'd love to," Hermione said, giving the sad woman a squeeze. The group went and dropped their shopping off in their rooms before joining Molly in the entrance hall and flooing to the Burrow. As soon as they arrived, they were shocked by what they saw. The entire Weasley family was present, as well as the Grangers, and Harry's relatives, even the elves. Much to Harry's shock, Kaiari and Ginavive had even turned up to see him off. He was most shocked by this, as he had never seen the two ancient elves in the human world before.

After everyone had been greeted, they sat down to a delicious meal prepared by Molly and Minh. The conversation over dinner varied from mindless chatter to serious discussions about the past and future. Mei and Lei were catching up with their mother, and Minh and Eustace were taking a last opportunity to get to know their great grandson. Glen, after all, would not be coming back. Throughout dinner, Sirius and Severus glared at each other, and Remus tried his best to distract his fellow Marauder.

When dessert arrived, Harry was interrupted from his conversation with Ginny by a familiar voice in his head.

Are you sure you're ready for this, Harry? Dumbledore's voice echoed in Harry's mind.

I'll be fine Harry reassured him, After all, it can't be any worse than the last time

I hope you're right, Harry, I hope you're right, the former Headmaster muttered.

The next day, all eight of the travellers were up bright and early. At breakfast, they gathered in the dining room in Harry's castle, each picking at his or her food. Eventually, they gave up and headed to their rooms for any last minute packing they had to do.

At eleven thirty, they met up again in the entrance hall, each sporting a bottomless backpack on their backs, containing all of their supplies.

Around Harry's neck the Amulet of Time was clearly visible on its shining chain.

" Well, this is it," Harry said, before taking a pinch of floo powder and flooing to Hogwarts. The others quickly followed suit. They had decided that the school was the best place to leave from, as it may already exist in the place they ended up. It was also a place where a lot of their friends were, so they could say goodbye.

Once they had all arrived, they headed down to the Great Hall, where Minerva McGonagall was waiting for them. Uncharacteristically, she gave each of them a tight hug.

" Now, are you sure you have everything?" she asked. They all rolled their eyes as one, and nodded their heads simultaneously. Before long, other people started arriving, including the Weasleys, the Grangers, the Potters, the elves and the teachers. Even Draco came to see them off. After a round of hugs and tears, Harry was startled out of his conversation with Professor Sprout by a pair of tiny arms wrapping around his waist. Looking down, he grinned in delight.

" Dobby! Long time no see!"

" Dobby is coming to see off Mister Harry Potter Sir!" the elf squeaked.

" It's good to see you, Dobby. I'm sorry I didn't visit you more often, but I've been busy with the war and everything..."

" Dobby is not minding, Mister Harry Potter Sir. Harry Potter Sir is a great wizard, and Dobby is knowing he is taking care of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. Dobby is honoured that Mister Harry Potter Sir is thinking of Dobby."

The conversation lasted for a few more minutes, with Dobby almost squeezing the life out of Harry, before they were interrupted by Hagrid pulling Harry into a crushing hug, sobbing loudly. After consoling his large friend, Harry moved to round up the others. After many last farewells, Harry gathered the time travellers into a huddled group and ordered them all to touch the amulet. As he held the object in his hand, he looked out at his friends and family.

“ Well, here goes nothing. I’ll miss you all, and thank you for always being there for me. We’ll see you soon. Bye.”

There was a chorus of farewells, especially directed at Glen, before Harry looked at his watch. Twelve o’clock exactly. With a deep breath, he muttered the fateful words.

“ Tempus Vehere!”

With a flash of light, the eight friends disappeared from the modern world and into the unknown.

Chapter Three – Where on Earth?

The eight time travellers arrived at their destination with a loud bang, a great flash of light, and a violent jolt. None remained on their feet, each falling to the ground heavily, causing them to groan in pain.

“ I thought you said it didn’t hurt!” Sirius complained, rubbing his bruised elbow.

“ Yes, I was under the impression it was a flawless transition,” Severus agreed.

“ It’s never done that before!” Harry exclaimed, rubbing his own damaged knees. With a groan of pain, he placed the amulet under his robes and pushed himself to his feet.

“ Harry’s right,” Ginny said, “ Every other time it’s been a smooth trip. The first time we just had a flash of light and a feeling like a portkey, and the next thing we knew we were on the Hogwarts grounds, next to the lake. After that it was the same thing, only we ended up in the Great Hall.”

“ By the way, did you ever figure that out?” Ron asked his girlfriend.

“ What?” Hermione asked, confused.

“ Why we moved in space and not just in time on two of the trips.”

“ No,” she answered with a frown. The adults and Glen shot her confused looks, not understanding what they were talking about. With a resigned sigh, she explained that on the first and last trips, they had moved locations as well as times, and they didn’t know why. Severus had an alarmed look on his face at this, and Remus looked a little unnerved. Sirius just shrugged.

“ Why is that a problem?” he asked.

“ Because we can’t explain it,” Harry said, “ We just know it happens. Hypothetically, we could end up anywhere.”

“ But we’re not going to get lost, you prepared for this, didn’t you?”

Harry coloured as he realised that this aspect of time travelling with the Amulet of Time had completely slipped his mind. With alarm, he quickly took in his surroundings and groaned.

“Guys....”

“What?” Severus asked, worried.

“Look around us. We left from the Great Hall, but we’re in the middle of a field.”

Quickly, the others took in their surroundings. With the bumpy arrival and distraction of discussing the special movement, they hadn’t thought to look around them. As Harry had said, they were in the middle of a meadow, trees surrounding them in the distance. Behind the trees to the west, they could see a mountain range as far as the eye could see. In the other directions were a few forested slopes, but nothing else. There were no buildings, no lake, and worst of all, no Hogwarts.

“Where on Earth...?” Remus exclaimed.

“Something tells me we’re not in Kansas anymore,” Harry muttered, gaining him a nervous laugh from Hermione and confused looks from everyone else.

“Where are we?” Ginny asked, “We can’t be where Hogwarts is, because there are trees all around, mountains in the wrong places and no lake. We must have moved.”

“But moved where? And where are the people? There should be some sign of civilisation!” Hermione exclaimed.

“This is no place I have ever been,” Glen added, looking a little disconcerted.

“Harry, you’d best get the maps out,” Remus suggested, “I suppose we might be able to figure out where we are.”

“I hope so, Moony, because if we can’t we’re a bit stuck.”

“ Why?” Glen asked.

“ Because we don’t know where we are. We can’t get to Hogwarts if we don’t know where we are. For one thing, we can’t apparate to somewhere without knowing our location, so apparition is out. The same goes for portkeys. They need a precise point of origin. We can’t walk, because we don’t know which direction to walk in,” Ginny replied, a hint of panic showing in her voice.

“ Well, why do we have to go to Hogwarts?” Sirius asked.

“ Because it’s the most logical place to go,” his godson told him, “ After all, it has a library for research, and food and shelter. The only problem is, we don’t know if it’s been built yet.”

The others groaned in protest and sat down on the grass in a circle, removing their backpacks and rummaging inside to find the maps. Once they had extracted them, they laid the map of Britain in the middle of the circle and began marking possible locations, based on the terrain around them. After an hour of complicated spells and calculations, they narrowed it down to three places on the map.

“ Alright, so if our calculations are correct, we’re either in North Wales, near Llandudno, in the Scottish Highlands, or in Northumberland?” Severus asked in exasperation.

“ Yes,” Ginny said simply, looking defeated, “ We can’t narrow it down any more than that. And even those locations are sketchy. We could be anywhere within a hundred miles of those three places. That is, if the landscape isn’t different to that on the map. I don’t know if anyone else can sense it, but this place feels a lot older than even the time of the founders. Even if we did find out where Hogwarts should be, I doubt we would find it when we got there.”

Harry perked up at this, remembering something from the very first trip through time.

Simbi? Nirah? Can you taste the air for me?

Of course the female replied.

We are once more not in our own time Simbi concluded.

The air tastes different? Harry asked.

Yes, very different. It is different to the first time we moved, as well. I believe the atmosphere is not the same. We must have moved a great distance for this amount of change to have occurred

Thanks, guys Harry answered, turning to the others.

“Gin, you’re right. They say the atmosphere itself is different. If I remember my Muggle chemistry correctly, it suggests that the pollution in the air is virtually none existent. We’re definitely not in the time of the founders, by a long way.”

“I thought you said we wouldn’t go that far back!” Glen said, starting to panic.

“I never said that,” his father corrected, “I said it was unlikely. Unfortunately, we seem to be a very long way into the past, and in the middle of nowhere. I suggest we pitch our tents for the night and stay put. I know it’s only lunch time, but I don’t think we should go anywhere until we know for certain what we’re doing. This is a nice location, flat enough for the tents, and near enough to the forests for us to go hunting, so I say we make camp.”

“I agree,” Ron said, “There’s no sense in us getting lost, is there?”

“Alright, we’ll set up camp, but we can’t stay here indefinitely,” Sev told them, “We’ll have to find some kind of civilisation. There’s bound to be some people around here somewhere. Even if we only find primitive Muggles, I know for a fact that wizarding cultures have existed thousands of years before their Muggle counterparts.”

“That’s true,” Harry said, “There have to be some magical folk around here somewhere, it’s just a matter of finding them.”

It took them over an hour to set the camp up how they wanted it. As their bags were bottomless and weightless, they had brought four tents between the eight of them, knowing that certain members of their group would want privacy. The bulky tents didn’t take up extra

space like they would have done for Muggles, so it wasn't a problem. Harry and Ginny had their tent set up in no time, as did Hermione and Ron, but the others were having a lot more trouble. Sirius and Remus had theirs inside out, which really didn't help. They were doing better than Severus and Glen, though. They had somehow managed to erect theirs in a most curious shape. Instead of being the normal shape of a tent, it looked suspiciously like a teepee. This caused the others to burst out laughing, and the two responsible to both storm off angrily. Despite the state of their own tent, the older Marauders were overjoyed at the opportunity to tease their school enemy.

It took the other four over half an hour to fix the messes, Hermione and Ron taking on Sirius and Remus' mistake, while Harry and Ginny tackled the others' creation.

"It's almost a shame to dismantle it," Harry said, "It really is a masterpiece!"

Ginny, giggling, pulled out her much loved camera and took several pictures of it before they took it apart. Eventually, everything was set up, and while Ron and Sirius went off to collect firewood, Ginny, Harry and Hermione decided it would be best to go hunting. Ginny was an obvious choice for this task, as she was the best archer they had, and the others also had a lot of experience. As soon as Glen and Severus had stopped sulking and had returned to camp, the three headed off for the forest.

"Are you sure this is going to be safe?" Hermione asked as they reached the tree line, "I mean, what if it's like the forbidden forest, and has acromantula and unfriendly centaurs? Or werewolves and vampires!"

"Hermione, calm down," Harry said, "If there are any acromantula, we'll deal with them. The same goes for centaurs. As for vamps and werewolves, I can take care of them. I'm more worried about us getting lost."

"We'll just have to make sure not to leave the trail," Ginny reassured them, "Then we'll be fine."

After each taking a deep breath and having one more glance at the camp, they plunged into the forest, walking in as straight a line as possible. Fortunately, there was an animal trail vaguely visible on the floor, so they made sure to stick to it. After about twenty minutes of walking, Harry raised his hand in a signal for them to stop.

There are some deer up ahead he told them telepathically.

Where? his wife replied in kind.

Behind that fallen tree. I can smell them. Gin, you go around to the left, and I'll go to the right. 'Mione, stay here. The first to get a clear shot, take one down

The other two nodded in agreement, before Harry and Ginny crept in their directions silently. Hermione moved forward a little. Once they were all in position, they took up their bows and removed an arrow from their quivers. One by one they aimed at the unsuspecting animals and shot their arrows through the air. Immediately, the herd began to scatter, leaving two of their injured behind. Hermione and Harry had shot the same doe, and Ginny had taken down a bambi. Moving forwards, they quickly cut the throats of their prey and levitated them.

" These should last us a few days," Harry said in satisfaction.

" Yes, but we'll have to be careful to ration the meat. After all, we don't know how lucky we'll be with our hunting. We don't know how often we'll be this successful."

" Let's go back now, before we get lost," the young redhead suggested, and the others readily agreed. The forest was starting to give them the creeps. As they walked, they felt as if hundreds of eyes were watching their every move.

" Do you feel that?" Hermione asked, nervously.

" If you mean the gazes, then yes," Harry said, " I cant see anything or smell anything, but I'm sure we're being watched."

“ Let’s just get out of here,” Ginny said, taking Harry’s hand and holding it tightly.

The three quickened their paces, and before they knew it, they were bursting out of the trees and into the late afternoon sunlight. The sudden increase in light blinded them briefly, but as soon as they could see again they headed straight for the camp. The only one there when they returned was Glen.

“ Glen, where is everyone else?” Hermione asked in concern.

“ Ron and Sirius are still collecting wood. I don’t know how much they think we’ll need, but I’m sure they’ve found enough to last for a month. What’s wrong with magical fires I don’t know.”

“ Glen, using magic’s not a good idea. We don’t know what attention it could attract,” Harry said, “ There are some dangerous magical creatures that are attracted to magic, and we don’t want to bring anything to our camp. There’s also and people that may be around here to consider. We’re best off doing this like Muggles for as long as possible. The tents are alright, as they’re shielded not to give off magic, but any done outside of them would attract attention. Where are Remus and Severus?”

“ They left a while ago to scout out the meadow. I think they just wanted to stretch their legs, personally. That and discuss our situation. I know they don’t exactly like each other, but they are both professionals and academics, so they know the merits of working together.”

“ You have a point,” Harry agreed, before setting the deer down near the centre of camp and taking out a dagger. Once he had laid out a mat on the ground, he pulled the larger of the animals towards him and started to skin it. His son soon joined him, pulling the other deer over and helping to carve up the meat.

“ What do you think is going to happen to us?” he asked his father in Anglo-Saxon.

“ I don’t know, Glen, I don’t know,” Harry told him, “ Can you understand why I wanted to come with you, though? If you’d been

alone here, how long would you have lasted? I know you can take care of yourself, but there is safety in numbers.”

“ I know, and I’m glad you came. The others, too.”

“ Our next move will be to find civilisation,” Harry told him, “ We have to live here for a year, and personally I’d rather not spend it in this field. We’ve pretty much decided that Hogwarts won’t be built for at least a few thousand years, so we have to have somewhere to head for. I think our best bet would be continental Europe. If I remember my history correctly, the oldest wizarding civilisations are the Japanese, the Egyptians, the Aztecs and the Mediterraneans. The Greeks and Romans might be around by now, but as we don’t know how far back in time we are, we might be a bit before their time, in which case we’ll head for Egypt. Japan and America are a lot further to travel, and we don’t want to venture too far from where Hogwarts will be.”

“ That sounds reasonable,” Glen said, and the pair fell into silence.

Over the next hour, Ron, Sirius, Remus and Severus each returned from their respective explorations. Within minutes, Severus and Sirius were at each other’s throats, complaining that the other was to blame for them not knowing where they were. Eventually, Hermione placed silencing charms on them to give the rest of the group a break.

As darkness began to fall and the temperature started to drop, Harry and Hermione, being raised by Muggles, managed to get a fire started. The deer meat was speared on sharpened sticks and held over the fire to cook.

“ You know, I never thought I’d be going camping with my school rival, my best friend, and two generations of Potters, neither of which are James,” Remus said.

“ It’s a funny old world, alright,” Ron agreed.

“ What’s the plan for the immediate future?” Harry asked.

“ Tomorrow we’ll go looking for signs of settlements. With there being a stream nearby, there are sure to be people around, even if there

are Muggles. Any ideas about where we are would be useful," Remus told them.

" Sounds like a reasonable plan. What do we do if we don't find anyone?" Harry asked.

" Go to plan B."

" Which is?"

" Head south," the werewolf replied, " This is an island after all, we'll reach water eventually. Severus and I thought it would be best to head for the continent."

" That's what I thought," the Boy-Who-Lived agreed.

The group fell silent again as they each ate their meat. Before long, Glen and Ginny began yawning, and by mutual agreement the eight decided to turn in for the night. Upon entering their tent, Ginny gave her husband a firm hug.

" How bad can it get?" she whispered. Harry decided not to answer, knowing she wouldn't like what he had to say.

The next morning, Harry and Ginny were startled awake by shouts coming from outside their tent. Leaping out of their four poster bed, they quickly threw on a clean set of robes and went to see what the commotion was about. When they reached the entrance to their tent, they stood and watched the chaos in confusion.

Severus, Sirius and Remus were standing just past the tents, shouting at each other. Glen was trying to mediate, but wasn't getting very far. At one of the other tents, Ron and Hermione were peeking out, wondering what was going on.

" Do you know what the fuss is about?" Ginny asked, making her way over to her brother and his girlfriend.

" We're not sure, they started a few minutes ago, but we haven't figured out why," the other redhead replied.

“ Well, I guess we’d better ask them then,” Harry said reasonably, before striding forward and pulling Severus and Sirius apart.

“ Alright, you lot, what’s going on?”

The three quieted immediately, looks of guilt on their faces. Severus was the first to recover.

“ We awoke this morning to find something rather disturbing.”

“ And what’s that?” Harry growled, showing his annoyance.

“ There are rocks outside the camp,” Remus explained. Harry raised one eyebrow in response.

“ Rocks? Really? ‘Cause, gosh, you never see *those* in a field,” he said sarcastically.

“ Not just any rocks, Harry,” Sirius told him, “ They’re arranged rocks.”

“ So? We probably just didn’t notice them yesterday. It’s no big deal,” the boy answered, looking skeptical.

“ That’s just it,” Remus said, “ They weren’t there yesterday.”

“ Are you sure?” Ron asked, coming up behind his best friend, Ginny and Hermione right behind him.

“ Positive. We scouted out the whole meadow yesterday, and there were no rock formations. Have a look for yourselves,” the Potions Master said with a scowl. Sure enough, as they looked around the perimeter of the camp, they found rocks laid out in a pattern. It looked like a collection of lines and spirals.

“ Well, that’s a bit unnerving,” Ron said, finally, looking slightly disturbed.

“ I’ll say,” his sister agreed, “ How do you suppose they got there? And what do they mean?”

“ They’re a warning,” Harry concluded.

“ But what does it mean?” his wife asked, taking his hand in hers and squeezing it tightly. Harry pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her before replying.

“ It means we are not alone.”

Chapter Four – The Locals

“ What do you mean, we are not alone?” Severus sneered skeptically.

“ Exactly as I told you,” Harry replied, “ We’re not the only people here.”

“ I think we gathered that, Harry,” Remus said patiently, “ But what brought you to that conclusion?”

Harry raised one eyebrow at the werewolf and gestured to the patterns of stones all around them.

“ So are you telling me they arranged themselves, Remus?” he said sarcastically, “ Or did they materialise out of thin air? Maybe the aliens left them here as markers for landing their flying saucers!”

“ Do you think that’s true?” Ron asked in alarm, gaining him a whack on the back of the head from his girlfriend.

“ Of course there are no aliens, Ron, he was just being sarcastic.”

“ Oh,” the redhead replied, blushing in embarrassment.

“ That still doesn’t explain them, though,” Ginny pointed out, “ Now can we stop fighting for just a minute and work this out? I for one would like an explanation.”

“ Let’s discuss it over breakfast,” Glen suggested, and was met with nods all around. The group made their way over to the remnants of the fire and began to build it up again. Autumn was setting in early, a probable result of a lack of global warming, leaving the morning air rather chilled. As soon as the fire was restarted and the adults had thrown a number of logs onto it, Glen opened his backpack and extracted a frying pan, some bacon and a dozen eggs. They hadn’t brought much food with them, just enough to last them for a few days while they got themselves established. The deer meat from the night before wasn’t suitable for breakfast, and Glen thought they would all appreciate a cooked breakfast after the events of the morning. As soon as the food was on the fire cooking away, the conversation turned back to the rocks.

“ So, any sensible suggestions?” Remus asked.

“ If it was aliens, we’d best ask Snivellus,” Sirius said with a malicious smirk, “ After all, I always said he wasn’t from this planet.”

“ You wound me, Black,” Sev sneered, “ It’s refreshing to see your insults haven’t improved with age. Not that a Gryffindor would have the intellect to come up with an insult if his life depended on it. Too much bone in their heads and not enough brain...”

“ Why you...” Sirius raged, leaping at the Potions Master. Fortunately Harry had been watching the proceedings closely and managed to stun the animagus before he reached the Slytherin.

“ Alright you two, cut it out,” he growled, “ We’re not going to get anywhere with you two at each other’s throats.”

“ And you hoped they’d learn to get along...” Ron muttered, causing his brother in law to glare at him. He quickly shut up.

“ One day,” Harry said angrily, “ Less, even. Nineteen hours we’ve been here, and we’re already falling apart. We have to live together for at least three years, and you’re fighting after less than a day. I must say, I am severely disappointed in you both.”

“ He started it,” Severus whined, pointing at Sirius.

“ I don’t care who started it, Sev, I’m finishing it. Now, we have a situation on our hands, and I intend to deal with it. If you plan on bickering all the time, go and do it somewhere else. I’m not standing for it.”

The two adults had the good grace to look ashamed. After glaring at each other for a minute, they both nodded and moved to opposite ends of the group and promptly ignored each other’s presence. By this time the breakfast was cooked, and Glen served them all. The group fell into an uncomfortable silence as they each devoured their food and thought about the problem at hand. Once they were finished, Ginny cleared her throat.

“ I think now that we’ve all calmed down, we might be prepared to deal with this like grown ups. I suggest we assume, until we have evidence to the contrary, that the rocks were placed there by some kind of people. Yesterday, when we were in the forest hunting, we felt as if we were being watched, but couldn’t see anyone. I don’t know if that’s significant, but if there really were people watching us, it would explain the incident to some extent. Maybe they spotted us yesterday and are warning us in some primitive way that we are not welcome here.”

“ That sounds reasonable,” Hermione agreed, “ After all, we could be violating private land, or a burial ground, or sacred place of some sort. We have no way of knowing.”

“ So, let us assume there are ‘people’ here,” Sev said, “ Do we have any idea what sort of people they are? Muggle or magical humans? Magical creatures of some kind? Any suggestions?”

“ I doubt they are Muggles,” Harry said, “ When we were in the forest, I couldn’t smell them. I know I’m not a full vampire, but my nose is pretty sensitive. They didn’t have a scent, or if they did they know how to hide it. I couldn’t hear them either. Remus, you might want to look into it. Your wolf senses may be able to pick up something I couldn’t.”

“ I’ll go into the woods later and have a look around,” the werewolf agreed.

“ Good. I also don’t think they were vampires. I would have known if they were.”

“ How about elves?” Ron suggested.

“ It’s possible,” the Boy-Who-Lived agreed, “ They would certainly be around in this time. The break with the humans won’t happen for many years.”

“ So we know they’re not Muggles or vampires,” Glen recapped, “ Anything else?”

“ They must be sentient,” Severus pointed out, “ Or they wouldn’t be arranging rocks or making warnings. They must have some sort of intelligence.”

“ I think we should let it rest for today, and see if anything else happens,” Harry concluded, “ We should scout out the area and see if there’s anything else suspicious, and come back to camp. I suggest we don’t stay here for more than a week, though. You never know what’s going to happen if they take exception to our presence and decide to attack.”

“ Do you really think it’ll come to that?” Ginny asked, nervous.

“ It’s possible Gin. I also think we should hide some of our possessions until we move on. At any time they could try and capture us. If they were to be successful, we’d lose our things, and that would be disastrous.”

“ Agreed,” Severus said, “ It’s better to be safe than sorry.”

The discussion over, they each went their separate ways, tidying the camp, rearranging their tents, hiding the most valuable of their possessions, and gathering firewood. After lunch, Severus headed off to the far side of the field to brew a collection of healing potions and Remus headed into the forest with Harry and Sirius to see if they could find anything. Unfortunately, the people were very elusive, and their combined efforts came up with nothing. By nightfall, the group was a lot edgier than they were the night before.

“ What if they attack us while we’re asleep?” Ginny asked that night as she and Harry were lying in bed together. The boy pulled her into his arms and kissed her forehead tenderly.

“ Don’t worry, Gin, the tents are warded on the inside, so they won’t get inside. We’ll be fine, and no matter what, I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“ I hope you’re right, Harry. I hope you’re right,” she murmured before drifting off to sleep.

What seemed like minutes later, but was in fact several hours, Harry was awoken by a tingling in his nose. Groaning, he turned over and buried his head in Ginny's hair, trying to go back to sleep. The tingling was persistent, though, and as he groggily opened his eyes he noticed an odd flickering light outside the tent. With a frown, he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and sat up, looking at the tent wall in confusion. It took his sleep fogged mind a few minutes to realise what he was smelling. Smoke. With a jerk of surprise that caused Ginny to stir and wake, he leapt out of the bed and pulled his robes on.

"What's going on, Harry?" Ginny whispered sleepily from the bed.

"There's a fire outside the tent," her husband replied, causing her to sit up in alarm.

"What?!"

"I'm going to investigate. You can stay here if you want," he said, but Ginny was already getting out of the bed and pulling her own robes on. When they opened their tent flap, they took in the scene in horror. All around the tent, long torches had been embedded in the ground, flames rising from the tops of each of them. In the tent next to theirs, they could see Remus and Sirius emerging, the werewolf having obviously smelled the smoke as well.

"Harry? Did *you* do this?" the Defence professor asked in bewilderment.

"It wasn't us," Harry told him, "I'm guessing we've had another visit from the locals."

"Should we wake the others?" his godfather asked.

"No, leave them, we'll tell them in the morning. Gin, bring your camera and take a few pictures. Siri, Remy, help me put the torches out. We don't want the whole camp going up in flames."

They quickly moved to carry out their allotted tasks, the Marauders running to gather their wands and Harry grabbing a bucket of water. As soon as he saw the other two dousing the flames with their wands, he paled and ran over to them.

“ What are you doing?!” he yelled, “ We agreed not to use magic, you don’t know what could happen in an unfamiliar environment!”

“ Harry, they know we’re here, and they’re not happy about it. I doubt using our wands now will really matter,” Remus said, dousing more of the flames. With a resigned sigh, Harry relented and waved his hand, causing water to fall from the sky and put out the fires. Once they were all safely doused, the four time travellers headed back to their tents, each putting up a number of wards around the tents before doing so. After all, if they were going to use magic, it was best to do so to protect themselves.

The morning finally came and Harry and Ginny were the first to emerge from their tent, not having been able to go back to sleep the night before after the fire incident. They immediately headed to the stream for a bath, before trying to figure out the torches. As they were the night before, the torches were embedded deep in the earth, the tops burned and charred. It didn’t take long before they were joined by Hermione and Ron.

“ What on earth are these?” Hermione asked, perplexed.

“ Torches. They were burning last night. I woke up in the middle of the night and smelled smoke. When we came to investigate, these were here and burning. Remus and Sirius saw it too. We didn’t see any future in waking you, as we figured they’d still be here in the morning. We’ve put some wards up to keep hostile forces out, but we don’t know what good they’ll do.”

“ You used magic?” Ron asked, alarmed, “ I thought we decided not to until we knew it was safe!”

“ The situation is appropriate, Ron,” Ginny told her brother, “ The wards may prove necessary, and we don’t want to tempt fate. I have a very bad feeling about this.”

“ An ‘I’m a girl and my intuition is telling me there’s something wrong’ sort of bad feeling, or an ‘I’m a Seer and I know the future’ sort of bad feeling?” Ron asked.

“ The Seer kind. We’re missing something; I’m just not sure what.”

Not long after, the group were joined by the rest of the camp, and the story was relayed to Severus and Glen. They all agreed that warding the camp would be a good idea, and spent the rest of the day setting up as many protections as possible. By the time night rolled around once again, everyone was exhausted, and they all fell into deep, dreamless sleeps.

The morning of their fourth day was met with apprehension. If the previous two days were anything to go by, they would have a surprise waiting for them when they emerged from their tents. Hermione was the first to wake that morning, and her scream of shock quickly roused the rest of the camp. When they emerged, they looked in the direction she was facing. Just behind the ring of torches they could see a glimmer of water.

“ What the...” Sirius said as he went forward to investigate, “ It looks like a river.”

“ But there wasn’t one there yesterday,” Glen said, a hint of fear in his voice.

“ Glen’s right,” Ginny agreed, “ Yesterday was flaming torches, the day before was rocks. That sort of thing can be explained away as the locals warning us to leave. Rivers are a little harder to make suddenly appear.”

“ Yes, they must have some magical capabilities to do that. Muggles could do the other things, but not this,” Harry said, walking along the edge of the river, following it all the way around the camp until he arrived back where it started.

“ Erm...guys, this isn’t a river,” he said.

“ What is it then?” Severus snapped, his nerves beginning to fray.

“ It’s a moat. It surrounds the camp, and if you look carefully at the location, you’ll see that it goes just around the edge of the wards, on the outside. Whatever is causing this mustn’t be able to get in, so they’re trying to make sure we won’t get out.”

“ I don’t get it,” Sirius said, “ I mean, we’re not doing any harm. We haven’t threatened them in any way...”

“ Siri, we’re assuming we’re dealing with a primitive culture,” Remus explained, “ They’re bound to be superstitious and wary of strangers. It’s likely this won’t stop until we move on.”

“ When are we leaving then? I don’t think we should hang around here for too much longer,” Ron asked.

“ We’ll leave in the morning,” Harry decided, “ After all, they obviously can’t get through the wards. We’ll plan our next course of action today, and head out tomorrow.”

“ Good idea,” Hermione agreed, “ I for one will not be sad to see the back of this place.”

The rest of the day was spent gathered around the fire, the maps of Britain and Europe spread out in front of them. None of them wanted to stay any longer than they had to, and they thought heading for Europe would be the best choice. After all, it was their most likely chance of successfully finding civilisation. As autumn was setting in, and winter would be upon them before they knew it, it was also a wise idea to head south. If they couldn’t find a more permanent structure to pass the coldest months in, then heading for warmer climes was the most sensible decision.

Eventually they had settled on a plan. They would pack up at first light and start flying south. Ron, Hermione, Harry and Ginny would be using their animagus forms, as they thought it would be the fastest way to travel. Portkeys were still not an option, and apparition was impossible without knowing where you were going. It would also become tiring very quickly. Glen was to be riding Ron’s broom, while Sirius flew Harry’s. Severus would ride on Harry’s back and Remus on Ron’s. Fawkes, of course, could fly himself, and would have the bags attached to his legs for him to carry. Phoenixes, of course, were known to be able to carry great weights.

That evening, the camp members were more than a little tense. Despite knowing they would be leaving in the morning, they were concerned about what the locals would try that night. They felt

relatively safe inside their wards, but there was still a niggling doubt in their minds. After all, they didn't know what sort of powers the natives may have. If they could make a moat appear around their camp without waking anybody up, they had to be powerful wizards.

As the sun rose on the fifth day, all eight time travellers left their tents and let out a collective sigh of relief. Nothing had changed. After packing up their belongings quickly and eating a small breakfast, they prepared to leave. Harry shrank their bags with a wave of his hand and conjured a small sack. Filling it with the shrunken items, he attached it to Fawkes' leg. The phoenix let out a trill and rubbed his head on Harry's cheek.

"Are we ready?" he asked the others, to which he received nods of acknowledgement, punctuated by a loud gasp.

"Look!" Glen yelled, pointing at the sky. Everyone followed the direction he was pointing, and yelled in shock at what they were seeing. A tornado was descending from the sky, heading in their direction.

"That's impossible!" Hermione yelled, "We don't get tornados in Britain! At least not *that* large!"

"Just because we don't get them that often, doesn't mean it's impossible," Severus growled back, getting into a defensive position. The others quickly followed suit.

"What do we do?" Sirius yelled over the noise of the wind.

"Strengthen the wards," Harry called back, moving his hands rapidly in an impressive display of spell casting. Hermione, Ginny, Ron, Glen and Severus quickly followed suit, until their hands were moving in a synchronised dance of power. The Marauders watched in amazement as the wards around them began to become visible.

"Wow," Remus gasped, awestruck. He had seen the others cast wandless magic before, but he had never expected them to be so coordinated in a spell of protection.

Eventually, the tornado seemed to dissipate, and the others stopped the magic.

“ Well, thank Merlin that’s over,” Ron gasped.

“ Indeed,” Sev agreed, resting his hands on his knees and bending over in an effort to catch his breath.

“ This isn’t normal,” Hermione stated. Silence descended over the group as they contemplated what had been happening to them. As they did, Harry felt a familiar melding of minds.

Harry, look at the evidence, Dumbledore’s voice said in his head.

I am, I’m not seeing it, he replied.

The rocks, the fire, the water and the air, Dumbledore said, *What does that give you?*

Harry thought it over for a minute before his eyes widened in realisation.

“ Guys, do you know what this means?”

“ What?” Ginny asked.

“ The Locals are Elementals.”

Chapter Five – Myleidi

" Elementals?" Ginny asked, " Are you sure?"

" Positive," Harry replied, a concerned look on his face, " It all adds up. We've been warned by earth, fire, water and air. I think we'd best leave before they start on the soul magic."

" I know it's the logical conclusion, Harry, but they can't be Elementals," Hermione said, slightly panicked.

" Why not," Harry asked, quirking an eyebrow at her.

" Because Elementals are legends! They were said to populate the world in a time before time, when the Earth was young and magic had not yet been fully harnessed! We're talking thousands of years, and even then, the reports of them are sketchy. If they existed at all, it was at a time long before the written word."

" Hermione, the evidence is *there*. Look at it!" Harry said heatedly, losing his patience, " Elementals are legend, yes. But all legends are based on fact. Now, all we have to go on are old tales and speculation. Is it so far-fetched an idea? Really?"

" Well, I can see how you came to this conclusion, but I doubt it's true!" Severus said, agreeing with the young witch.

" See? Severus agrees with me, Harry," Hermione said with a scowl, crossing her arms over her chest and giving the Boy-Who-Lived a disapproving glare.

" Alright, alright," Harry said, raising his hands in resignation, " Let's say it isn't Elementals, what else *could* it be?"

Silence reigned as everyone tried to think up another explanation. As soon as one started to open their mouths to suggest something, they thought better of it as they found a reason to contradict the idea. Eventually, Ron let out a resigned sigh.

" Alright, Harry mate, we're listening."

" Are you ready to admit I may be right?" Harry asked with a smirk, which became increasingly smug as everyone nodded, " Right, we know that we're a long time in the past, before the time of the founders by a long way. Therefore, we should assume that magic is not performed in a manner with which we are familiar. If I remember rightly, modern magic was pioneered by Merlin in the middle of the sixth century AD. Before that, magic was performed by different cultures in a variety of different ways, all with limitations and specialities."

" That's true, but surely we haven't gone back *that* far..." Ginny said, worried.

" Gin, if it's before the atmosphere began to be polluted, it could be *any* time. I doubt when we reach the continent we'll find anything more than tribes, though. I get the feeling that this place is old. Far older than even the Greek and Roman civilisations."

" If that's the case, they what do we do?" Glen asked.

" As I was saying," Harry continued, " We can expect to find different types of magic here. The Romans used some limited incantations, upon which Merlin based his magic, but not many. Mostly it involved chants and potions. The Greeks were the same, as were the Persians and Babylonians. Aztec magic was more ritual based, as was Egyptian magic. The India, Japanese and Chinese involved self-belief and divination. Nordic wizards were weather workers and rune users. We know all this from the records left behind. However, if the evidence around us proves correct, then we are in a time before records became common."

" Harry, you're babbling," Sirius said, " Just spare us the history lesson and give it to us in simple layman's terms."

Harry let out a loud sigh and shook his head. His godfather really didn't understand the situation they had found themselves in.

" Sirius, trust me, it's all relevant. What I'm saying is that we are further in the past than we were expecting, and that in this time, we should expect different branches of magic that we are unfamiliar with.

Therefore, the idea of Elementals is not as far fetched as you may think."

" That's all well and good, Dad, but what do we do about it?" Glen asked, reasonably.

" Simple. We don't understand it, so we don't fight it. We move on as soon as possible, and hope they don't follow us."

" I think it's a little late for that," Remus said, watching the tree line intently. The others followed his line of sight to the edge of the forest, where a line of people was stood, watching the group. They were dressed in simple tunics of animal skins, sharp spears and rocks in their hands. Their faces were painted with intricate patterns similar to those formed by the rocks outside the camp.

" I think we're about to meet the locals," Ginny muttered.

" At least we'll find out if I was right," Harry replied.

Before they could do anything, one of the people stepped forward and raised a large stick into the air, shouting something unintelligible to the group. They just looked at each other in confusion, before Hermione began to rummage in one of the backpacks, pulling out a thin book on translation spells.

" It's worth a try," she muttered as she tried a few of the spells out. None seemed to work, and the leader of the savages seemed to be becoming more and more irate.

" 'Mione, I think this is one of those occasions that a book can't solve our problems," Ron told his girlfriend. She nodded in agreement and replaced the book in the bag and reshrank it. The locals seemed to jump in surprise as she did so, and watched her cautiously as she replaced the bag in the pouch around Fawkes' leg.

" I think you upset him," Glen said, as the leader once more strode forward, yelling angrily and shaking his stick.

" I believe this is our cue to leave. Fawkes, you set off. We'll join you as soon as we can. Just head south, we'll catch up," Harry told the

phoenix. Fawkes replied with a trill and took to the sky. Meanwhile, the locals had been drawing closer, encircling the camp completely.

" Maybe we should just go, before they start attacking," Ginny suggested as the people reached the wards.

" I think it's a bit late for that," Sirius said, drawing his wand and preparing for the inevitable.

As soon as the locals reached the wards, they realised they couldn't get inside. The leader became even more incensed, rapping his stick against the dome of protection and shouting instructions to his people. Immediately, they began dancing and chanting, much to the confusion of the time travellers.

" What in Merlin's name are they *doing*?" Sev asked in exasperation.

Before anyone could answer, a series of vines erupted from the ground, wrapping tightly around the eight witches and wizards and binding them tightly. They immediately began to struggle, but soon gave up, realising they couldn't get free, and that the vines appeared to get tighter the more they moved. Magic wouldn't work either, as they couldn't move their hands. Harry concentrated hard, trying to force his magic to work without hand gestures, as he could sometimes do, but his mind was too panicked to focus properly. Eventually he gave up.

" Well, this is a bit of a pickle," he commented, gaining him vicious glares from the rest of the group.

" So, what's the plan?" Ron asked as the group was dragged out of the trees and into a clearing in the middle of the forest. The group was still wrapped in vines, and after being blown out of the wards with a strong wind, they had been dragged by the locals through the forest for what seemed like hours.

" I'm open to suggestions," Sirius said.

" We could apparate away," Glen suggested.

" I thought we covered this a week ago," Hermione said, " We can't apparate anywhere."

" How about changing into our animagus forms?" Severus put forward.

" It's worth a try, but it'll have to be someone with a small form. If we grow in size, the vines will crush us," Harry commented.

" I'll do it," Ginny agreed, before concentrating on her pelican form. With a slight pop she changed shapes, causing an uproar from the natives. They all pointed their sticks in the direction of the bundle of vines, and the others watched in horror as the pelican began to try and free itself. Instead of falling away, as they had expected, the vines tightened around the bird, trapping it once more.

" Oh, no!" Hermione exclaimed, mentally kicking herself, " Ginny, stop struggling! It's Devil's Snare!"

" You're kidding!" Ron yelled in disbelief, " Typical! You'd think with what happened in first year, you would have recognised it sooner!"

" Well, I'm sorry Ronald, but I was a little distracted by the violent Elementals!" Hermione screeched back.

" Well, last time you were just as distracted, and you figured it out! I thought you were supposed to be the smart one!"

" Nobody's perfect, Ron!"

" Apparently not!"

" Shut up, you two!" Harry yelled, stopping the quarrelling pair mid rant, " Now is *not* the time for a lover's tiff!

The couple immediately fell silent, looking embarrassed. In the mean time, all eight of them were dragged over to wooden posts sticking out of the ground. The natives were poking Ginny with a stick, still rather distressed at her changing shape, but taking no chances. Before they knew it, they were each secured to a post by more vines.

Once they were all tied up, the locals moved away and began to prepare dinner.

Harry watched the people in fascination. Their settlement was in the middle of the forest, with a canopy of leaves covering most of their village. Their homes comprised of wooden frames with animal pelts stretched over them. The centre had a clearing, with the sun beating down from a clear blue sky. This appeared to be the focal point of the village, with a large fire in the centre, surrounded by cooking pots. Their wooden posts were situated here, facing the fire.

Off to one side, Harry could see crude pens containing chickens, pigs and oxen. The people themselves were milling around the village, creating weapons and tools using sharp rocks. With a start, Harry realised that there was no metal anywhere to be seen. This was slightly worrying, as metal in one form or another had been around for thousands of years. That these people still used stone tools was disconcerting.

His attention wandered further around the camp, until something caught his attention out of the corner of his eye. Tied to the post next to him was an unfamiliar figure. It certainly wasn't one of the time travellers. Upon closer inspection, it seemed to be a young woman, no older than he was. Her head was bowed and resting on the vines binding her, and her long, silvery hair was matted around her face. He was more than a little startled when she moved slightly and he caught sight of a pointed ear poking through her hair.

"Sev?" he called, catching the attention of the man tied on the post to his left, "Do *you* see what *I* see?"

"What am I supposed to be seeing?" The Potions Master asked.

"There's an elf tied up to the post next to mine."

Severus stretched his neck as far as he could and peered around Harry. Sure enough, there she was, just as Harry claimed.

"You're right," he gasped, "She looks like she's been here a while, from the state of her. I wonder where she came from."

" Sev, could you pass the message on? You're nearer to them. Get them to pass it along. I'm going to try and talk to her."

" I thought we couldn't understand the people here," Severus said with a frown.

" She's an elf, she's sure to speak an elven dialect. Their language hasn't changed much over thousands of years. I'm sure I can make her understand me somehow."

" Well, good luck, I think you'll need it. She doesn't appear to be in much shape to be carrying on a conversation."

Severus turned away, calling out to Hermione and explaining the situation to her. Harry turned away from his friend and called out to the girl.

" Hello? Excuse me," he said in elvish. The woman jerked slightly at the words, and looked tiredly over to him. She seemed a little startled to see him, and frowned. With a raspy voice she said something back, but Harry wrinkled his brows in confusion. It sounded like elvish, but the words didn't make any sense. She had obviously thought the same of what he said. Trying again, he spoke in the form of the language he knew.

" My name is Harry Potter. What is your name?"

This time she had a look of intense concentration on her face, as she seemed to puzzle out what he had said. After a moment she nodded her head and smiled slightly.

" Myleidi," she said with a small but pleased grin that seemed to light up her dirty, tearstained face. Harry grinned back, glad that she had at least got the gist of what he was trying to say.

" How long have you been here?" he asked. She frowned and shook her head, obviously not understanding. Thinking quickly, Harry suddenly had an idea. Opening a mental link with her, he sent her a mental picture of the words written in the elvish script. She seemed surprised at the mental invasion, but immediately understood him. Using the same method, she sent back the image of written words,

saying she had been there nearly two weeks. With a grin, Harry closed the connection and opened one with the rest of his group.

Everyone, this is Myleidi. She's an elf, and she's been here just under two weeks

You understood each other, then? Sev asked.

Well, she understands me a little, but I found another way of communicating with her

Really? How? Hermione asked back.

Well, elven dialects are all the same language. The words are written the same, and the grammar is identical. However, the thing that varies is the pronunciation. Each colony of elves pronounces the language differently, so understanding each other using the spoken language is difficult. However, the written language is the same. I simply sent her a mental image of the words, and she read and understood them. The principle is the same as the Chinese language

Once Harry had broken the mental connection to his friends, he continued speaking to Myleidi. Despite her confusion about the mental link, they managed to hold a decent conversation. She told him she was a river elf, and that she had been heading back to her village when the Elementals had captured her. That was nearly two weeks ago, and she had been tied to the post ever since. Once a day she was brought food and water and force-fed it.

After asking her if she knew who their captors were, Myleidi explained that they were 'nature's children' and were avoided by her people. They had a reputation for savagery, and it was rumoured they performed evil rituals on the full moon. Harry, in turn, explained briefly that he and his friends were from a different place, and were unfamiliar with the world around them. When he asked her what time period they were in, she sent him a confused look.

What do you mean by time period? she mentally wrote.

What age are we in, in elven terms? he replied.

Myleidi, still not grasping the relevance of the question, gave him a straight answer.

The thirty second age

Harry gasped in surprise and suddenly broke the mental connection. Frantically working out the difference in his head, he came to a rather startling conclusion. Severus, having watched the silent conversation between the vampire and the elf, called out to his friend.

" Are you alright, Harry? What's wrong?"

" Sev, I've just found out when we are."

" Really? What time are we in?"

" Hang, on, let me work that out again, just to be sure..." Harry said, while adding up the figures more slowly. After the third time of coming to the same conclusion, he shakily turned to face the patiently waiting Potions Master.

" That can't be right..."

" Just tell me," Sev said, becoming annoyed.

" Well, she said this is the thirty second age, and our time is the forty eighth age..."

" What does that mean?" the other man growled, being unfamiliar with the elven method of counting ages.

" Well, as far as I can gather, we're a lot further from home than we could ever have expected. I think this is around the time the Muggles call the Neolithic Age."

Chapter Six – Escaping the Elementals

Sev blinked and stared at Harry in confusion.

“ Could you run that one by me again?” he asked, disbelieving. Harry gave him a sheepish look.

“ The Neolithic Age. I take it you’ve heard of it?”

“ Of course I’ve bloody heard of it!” Sev exploded, fiercely scowling at the younger man, “ I *can’t* believe this! I just *can not* believe this is happening to us!”

The Potions Master continued his tirade for a few more minutes, gaining him the attention of the rest of the group and a fair few of their captors. Eventually, Harry had to try and calm the man down before the locals became angry. They had already been captured by them; they didn’t want anything worse to happen.

“ Sev, stop it! We’re here, and there’s nothing we can do about it! Just calm down, and we’ll discuss this rationally!”

“ Rationally? Discuss it? What is there to discuss?!” he yelled in reply, not calming at all, “ We’re stuck in the middle of Merlin knows where in a time before recorded history, with hostile people and no sign of civilisation anywhere! What is there to be calm about?!”

“ What’s he talking about?” Ron called to Harry across the clearing. The vampire suddenly realised that in the excitement he had forgotten to tell the others. It wasn’t something he was looking forward to. Opening a mental connection with the rest of the group, he began to explain.

I’ve been talking to Myleidi, and from what I can gather based on the elven method of counting time, we appear to be in the Neolithic Era. Sev’s not happy

The others all gave him blank looks for a moment before the situation began to sink in for some of them. Sirius and Ron, though, looked at their friend blankly.

Neolithic Era? Sirius asked, I've not heard of that one. What sort of time frame are we looking at?

Harry looked back at his godfather nervously before giving him his reply.

I think this time is around 8000BC... he sent mentally, bracing himself for the inevitable protestations.

You're kidding... Ron said, sounding beyond shocked.

I only wish I were, mate Harry replied.

"Eight *thousand* BC!" Sirius hollered, the news having obviously just sunk in, "That's *not possible!*"

"I assure you, Black, it is entirely possible," a dejected and now calm Severus grunted.

"Nobody asked you, Snape," Sirius growled.

"I'm sorry, Black, I thought you posed a question to the group, I didn't realise I was no longer a part of it," Severus sneered at the animagus.

"You never were, *Snivellus*, you've been an outcast since birth."

"Really, Black, one would think all those years in Azkaban would have allowed you ample time to come up with new insults. I must have been mistaken."

"Cute, Snape, real cute. No wonder you don't have any friends with an attitude like that. I think you should seriously consider a personality transplant."

"I've heard it said that we see our own faults in others..."

"Would you two *shut up!*" Remus roared, silencing the arguing pair,
"I've had enough of the pair of you! We've been here less than a week, and already can't stand to hear your bickering any more. If what Harry tells us is true, then we have a lot of preparing to do, and we don't have time for petty squabbling!"

The clearing was silent. The Elementals, who had been going about their everyday lives, had stopped what they were doing to watch the strange creatures they had captured. Myleidi watched the group in stunned silence, trying to figure out what had suddenly upset her new friends. Harry, Glen, Hermione and Ron were both amused and annoyed at the pair. After all, they were supposed to be the responsible adults, and they were the ones causing the most trouble. Eventually, Hermione broke the silence.

“ You *do* realise that our book of translation spells is useless,” she commented.

“ What makes you say that?” her boyfriend asked.

“ Well, the spells in it only work on languages as old as the Bronze Age. Anything before that is an unknown, and therefore cannot be translated. If you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. It would certainly explain why we couldn’t use magic to understand the Elementals.”

“ She has a point,” Remus agreed, “ I suppose we’re not going to be able to talk our way out of this mess, so does anyone have any suggestions?”

“ We’ve tried the animagus transformation, and that didn’t work. Devil’s Snare is pretty tricky stuff; the only way we could get out of it is fire. They hate fire,” Hermione mentioned, to which Ron gave her a twisted smirk.

“ Shame we don’t have any wood, eh ‘Mione?”

“ Shut up, Ron,” the brunette grumbled.

“ We can’t use magic,” Severus reasoned, recovered from his berating from the werewolf, “ We can’t reach our wands and we can’t move our hands enough to do it wandlessly.”

“ True, but I could try and create a fire without gestures,” Harry suggested, “ I couldn’t do it before because I couldn’t concentrate, but having had time to calm down, I think I can start a fire large enough to free one of us. That’s all it will take.”

“ Who are you going to free?” Glen asked.

“ Ginny. She’s stuck in her pelican form, and I’m sure it’s uncomfortable. She can also use wandless magic, which Remy and Siri can’t, so she would be a good choice.”

Go for it Harry’s wife told him in his mind. With a slight nod, he closed his eyes and concentrated hard. The others watched intently as, after a few minutes, a small flame appeared on the ground in front of Ginny’s post. As the flames steadily grew, the Devil’s Snare tying her to the post began to loosen, and she immediately transformed back to her human form. Before it could loosen enough for her to move her hands, though, a nearby Elemental ran over, yelling at her in the strange tongue. With a few chanted words, the flames disappeared, and the plant tightened around the youngest Weasley, holding her firmly in place.

The noise of the shouting man had attracted a lot of attention in the village, and the leader came running over. After a quick conversation, the leader called forward more villagers, and they began to dance and chant once more. When they were done, they turned back to their tasks as if nothing had happened.

“ Well, that was...strange,” Ginny commented, “ As least I got to change back, though.”

“ You did, which is good. I’ll give it another try, just in case,” her husband said, before closing his eyes once more and trying again. This time, though, nothing happened.

“ It’s not working,” he said, defeated, “ They must have done something to prevent fire.”

“ Don’t worry, Dad,” Glen called from across the clearing, “ We’ll get out, you’ll see.”

“ I hope so, Son, I hope so,” he replied, before resuming his interrogation of Myleidi.

The day progressed with no further incidents, and it wasn’t until the sun began to rise the following day, that the group realised another

problem. The morning had been quiet, and the time travellers all woke up after fitful sleeps with sore muscles and stiff necks. As the village began to wake, the group made small talk, Harry continuing to try and find common ground with Myleidi. He was gradually connecting letters and sounds, making it easier for him to understand her when she spoke. The pair was eager to reach a common understanding so that they could best communicate. Myleidi was doing the same as Harry, and gradually they were fashioning a language which combined both of their dialects.

When the first rays of sunlight broke the horizon, nobody thought much of it. After all, it was just the way it went in the morning, darkness giving way to light. It wasn't until around ten o'clock, when the streams of light broke the canopy of the trees and shone down on the clearing that the group realised a serious problem.

Harry and Severus had been discussing a new potion theory when the younger man suddenly gasped in pain and screwed up his face. The Potions Master gave him a quizzical, yet concerned look.

"Harry, what's wrong?" he asked his suffering friend.

"Bugger," Harry muttered, as a thin trickle of blood began to seep out of his nose. By this time, Severus was beyond merely concerned and reaching fully blown worry.

"Harry, what's going on? What's happening?" he asked, panicked. His question caught the attention of the rest of the group, who looked at their friend in a mixture of shock and fear.

"Harry, are you alright, mate?" Ron called over.

"Just peachy," the dark haired boy gritted out through the pain, "Never better."

"There's no need for sarcasm," Sirius huffed, "We're just worried."

"It's nothing, Sirius," Harry said, as a second stream of blood began to fall from his other nostril.

“ It’s not nothing, Dad,” Glen yelled, frightened. After all, his father was in a lot of pain and was losing a rather large amount of blood, “ What’s causing it?”

“ The sun,” Harry grated out, “ It’s the sunlight.”

The others suddenly realised what the matter was. Harry was part vampire, and as such was rather sensitive to sunlight. Normally, as part of his morning routine, he applied a special salve to his skin which offered it protection for the day. The salve was simple and could be brewed in less than an hour from simple ingredients. He had, as usual, been applying it since he arrived in the past. The morning before he had been alright, because his skin was protected. Today, however, the salve had worn off and he hadn’t been able to reapply it.

“ Harry, you need to get into the shade!” Ginny screamed, tears streaming down her cheeks. She hated to see the person she loved more than life itself in pain.

“ I’m aware of that, Gin,” Harry gasped, “ Unfortunately it’s not an option!”

The boy fell silent, as did the rest of the group. There was nothing more to say. Myleidi watched the proceedings in bemusement. She could see that her friend was suffering, but she couldn’t understand why.

The day continued painstakingly slowly, the others in the group remaining silent and watching their friend suffer, helpless to do anything to ease his pain. Around one in the afternoon, Harry let out a loud screech, startling the others. The intense sun beating down from directly overhead had gradually caused his skin to blister, and now it had suddenly burst open in several places, leaving rivers of blood seeping from gashes in his face.

“ Harry, hang on,” Hermione shouted to him, sobbing lightly, “ The sun will go behind the trees in another hour or so. It’s nearly over.”

“ What about tomorrow?” Glen asked, causing the others to realise that this would continue for as long as they were there. There was nothing they could do about it.

A little over an hour later, the sun passed far enough across the sky that it was obscured by the trees surrounding them, and Harry let out a sob of relief.

“ Sometimes...” he gasped, “ I hate being a Dark Creature.”

“ You gonna be alright, mate?” Ron asked.

“ Yeah, Ron, my vamp healing should kick in about now. I could sure use some blood right now, though,” he moaned.

“ I guess we’ve found a down side to your vampirism,” Severus commented.

“ Yeah, I guess. You know, after meeting Vrykolakas, I more or less accepted this part of me, you know? But now, I would give anything to be a normal human again. The extra strength is useful, not to mention the healing powers, but I guess it’s not all good,” Harry muttered, before falling unconscious. The others watched him sadly as his skin slowly began to heal itself. He had lost a lot of blood, which wasn’t good for vampires, so he was healing a lot slower than he normally would.

“ What about tomorrow?” Glen asked.

“ We’ll just have to face it when it comes,” Remus said, then stared into space thoughtfully for a few minutes. Suddenly, his head snapped up, and he looked around at the others.

“ What’s wrong, Moony?” Sirius asked his oldest friend.

“ Harry said he sometimes hated being a Dark Creature, and I suddenly realised something. I’m a Dark Creature as well!”

One by one, realisation dawned on the others, and they all paled at the connotations. Remus was a werewolf, and in eight days time, the full moon would rise. If they were still in the village, the consequences would be disastrous.

The days passed very slowly for the elf and the time travellers. Every evening, Harry would heal from his wounds, and every day they

would reappear. As the days passed and he lost more and more blood, the longer the wounds would take to heal, and by the time the day of the full moon rolled around, his burns no longer healed properly. Scabs appeared, and the skin held together, but the sores remained present all through the night. The day two weeks after their arrival in the past saw Harry very weak and unconscious. The unhealed skin split open by eleven o'clock, and the situation gradually deteriorated throughout the day. By the time twilight came, Harry was almost permanently unconscious.

Throughout the day of the full moon, the Elementals had been extremely busy. As Myleidi had explained on the first day, the so called 'nature's children' were preparing for some sort of full moon ritual. The elf had claimed it was evil, so the time travellers were a little apprehensive. The villagers had been excited all day, and kept sending hungry looks in the direction of their captives. They had been gathering vast amounts of firewood and piling it in the middle of the clearing. The afternoon had been dedicated to dressing in primitive costumes and painting their faces with berry juice and animal blood. The scent of blood had been driving the young vampire crazy on the few occasions he regained consciousness.

When the sun finally began to set, the time travelling group, including a groggy Harry, began to get nervous. If Remus got loose, it could be disastrous. After all, his captivity meant that he had not been able to take the Wolfsbane potion. He would be out of his mind during the transformation, and therefore uncontrollable. Before the change began, though, the villagers gathered around the newly lit fire in the middle of the camp. For some reason, the Devil's Snare was protected from the flames, meaning it didn't lose its grip at all. As the prisoners watched, the locals began dancing and chanting, and an eerie drumbeat could be heard echoing around the area. In the middle of the circle of dancing men and women, the flames of the fire turned a ghostly blue, flickering ominously throughout the ceremony. Eventually, the leader stepped forward and looked at the captives, as if deciding which to choose. His eyes landed on a squirming Remus, who was feeling the effects of the full moon beginning to change his body. With a simple gesture, four villagers made their way over and started to untie the vines around the werewolf.

The others watched in horror as Remus was freed. Once he was loose, he fell to the ground and began to writhe in agony. The Elementals grabbed a leg each and began dragging him over to a large wooden pole positioned next to the fire.

“Merlin, they’re going to eat him!” Hermione gasped in horror. Sure enough, the pole appeared to be an enormous spit.

“They wouldn’t,” Ron said, confidently. His grin wavered, though, when he really looked at the scene in front of him. That was the logical conclusion. The nine of them were dinner. Myleidi had been right, the ‘nature’s children’ really did perform evil rituals on the full moon...

“This is going to be bad,” Sirius muttered as he watched his school friend beginning to change into a wolf. As he let out a long, loud screech of pain, the villagers dropped him in the dirt and began arguing and pointing. It was obvious they had never seen anything like this before. As the transformation finished and Remus stood up on his four paws, looking around with a rabid gleam in his eyes, the locals seemed to come to their senses and began chanting once again. Before they could perform their unique magic, though, Remus pounced.

The time travellers watched in morbid fascination as their friend proceeded to attack the village ruthlessly. Several of the people were crawling away in pain, suffering from bites and scratches. Most of them had run away into the woods, or had taken refuge in their huts.

“We have to do something before he kills anyone, or turns on us!” Severus shouted, panicked. He had been afraid of werewolves ever since the Whomping Willow incident in his fifth year, and seeing the object of so many nightmares in the flesh once again wasn’t helping.

“We’re not exactly in a position to do much,” Sirius spat, glaring at his rival.

“Well I for one refuse to be killed. But by all means, feel free to sit and do nothing, Black.”

“ Stop, before you even start,” Harry gasped out, pushing his own pain away and concentrating on the situation at hand. “ We don’t have time for this, we have to get out of here.”

“ And what do you suggest?” Glen asked.

“ I might be able to calm the wolf,” Harry said, closing his eyes and concentrating as hard as he could. Mind control was not an aspect of his mental gift he had explored, but the situation encouraged him to get it right. Reaching out, he forged a mental connection with the werewolf and took hold of the primitive mind, forcing it to bend to his will. A sweat broke out on his forehead as he concentrated had to subdue the wild beast. Eventually, he managed to convince the wolf to let go of the villager he had been happily munching on. The poor man crawled away in agony as Harry encouraged Remus to come over towards him.

Severus watched in nervous shock as Harry performed a variation of the Imperius on the werewolf. While not a spell, it had the same effects as the Unforgivable. The Potions Master was even more concerned when the beast began to walk in their direction, its head slightly cocked. He watched in fascination as Remus stood up on his hind legs, front paw on Harry’s vine covered chest, and began gnawing at the plant. After several minutes in which Harry seemed to be becoming increasingly weak, the Devil’s Snare fell away, and the wolf began to trot around aimlessly. The Boy-Who-Lived collapsed to the ground, panting heavily and barely holding on to consciousness.

“ Sev,” he murmured, “ Free them and make them transform. Take care of Myleidi. We have to get out of here.”

As soon as Severus nodded, Harry waved his hands slowly but purposefully and destroyed the vines holding the Potions Master. Severus collapsed to the ground as well, his legs unable to support him after over a week with his circulation cut off. As soon as he was free, Severus repeated Harry’s actions, freeing the others. By this time, Remus had realised that his mind was free and was about to attack. Fortunately, the rest of the group changed into their animagus forms and managed to subdue the werewolf.

Sev, being the only one still human, grabbed a shaky Myleidi and placed her on Ron's back, before doing the same to Harry, laying him on his son's back. That done, he changed into a velociraptor and led the group out of the clearing and into the security of the forest around them.

Chapter Seven – The Search for Civilisation

For the rest of the night, the bizarre group headed South through the dense forest, finally breaking through the tree line and into a meadow shortly before daybreak. The exhausted animagi and werewolf collapsed on the ground just under cover, and promptly fell asleep. Myleidi, who had dozed off several hours before on Ron's back, carefully dismounted and made her way over to Harry, who still appeared to be unconscious. Dragging her only source of information off the lion's back, she pulled him onto the stretch of grass and laid him down flat, before muttering a series of elven charms. After a few minutes, the injured vampire began to stir, opening his eyes and looking up at the bleary image of the elf.

"Myleidi?" he groaned.

"Harry! You live?" she asked in the mangled version of elvish they had concocted.

"I live," he grunted, trying to sit up. Intense pain seared through his body and he flopped back down to the ground.

"The others?" he asked, suddenly afraid that they had not all made it out of the Elemental village. After all, the last thing he remembered was freeing Severus. He had spent the entire journey unconscious.

"They sleep," Myleidi told him, "They walk many hours."

Harry nodded his head tiredly, closing his eyes slowly. They suddenly flew open a few minutes later, as his situation penetrated his foggy mind.

"Myleidi! The sun! Please, take me in the forest!"

The elf looked at him confused, before comprehension suddenly filled her features. She might not know what had been going on for the last eight days, but she hadn't failed to notice the effect the sun had on the young man. Lifting his slight frame in her strong arms, she moved them back under the cover of the trees and set Harry down in a small patch of flat ground. This time when he opened his eyes, he smiled at his new friend.

“ Thank you,” he murmured.

“ Is nothing,” she replied, before summoning up the courage to ask what she had been wondering about for the last week, “ Why the sun hurt you?”

Harry closed his eyes and let out a sigh of resignation. He had been expecting this question since the first time the deadly rays had burned him. The elf had watched it happen time and time again, but Harry had been in no state to explain to her. Now, though, he didn't really have a choice. The rest of the group had fallen asleep in exhaustion, and he was the only one who could communicate with her.

“ Myleidi, I am not man,” he said, hesitatingly. She gave him a rather confused look.

“ Not man?” she asked, “ What you are?”

“ I am son of man, son of elf,” he tried to explain. They had managed to communicate in a language they both recognised, but their mutually comprehensible vocabulary was rather limited, so trying to explain the concept was a little taxing.

“ Child of elf?!” she gasped, “ How many?”

“ One, two generations.”

She thought about what he had said for a minute before minutely nodding, encouraging him to continue.

“ Son of elf, son of man, cursed also,” he continued, to which she gave him an alarmed look.

“ Cursed! How?”

“ Curse by Dark beast...”

“ Dark one! No! Harry friend!” she said, panicked. Elves had never been comfortable with evil creatures, as they themselves were

inherently good. To realise that her friend was actually a Dark creature was a bit of a shock to the poor woman.

“ Myleidi, calm! Harry is friend, not evil. Partly cursed by drinker of blood, but not evil!” he explained. She looked horrified when she realised he was talking about vampires, but calmed significantly when he said he was not evil.

“ Drinker of blood,” she whispered, “ And elf? Strange...”

“ You have no idea,” Harry muttered to himself in English before once more pushing himself to a sitting position. Taking a deep breath and readying himself for pain, he let out a long, loud, continuous whistle. As soon as the sound died away, he collapsed back on the ground and fell once more into unconsciousness.

The next time Harry awoke, the sun was higher in the sky and there was a lot more activity around him. Pushing himself into a sitting position, propped against a tree, he watched as the rest of the group going about their business. As expected, Fawkes had responded to Harry’s whistle, and was perched on a nearby tree stump, watching the proceedings with interest. The others, who had obviously woken from their sleeps and decided to set up camp, were setting up the tents and casting very strong wards. Remus looked rather ill, but was still pulling his weight. Myleidi was sitting off to one side, staring into space and obviously mulling over recent events.

After several minutes, Ginny noticed her husband sitting up against the tree and let out a loud squeal, gaining the attention of the rest of the camp. She ran across the forest floor and flung herself at the young vampire, wrapping her arms around his neck and kissing him tenderly. When she pulled away, she sat down next to him and wrapped him in a firm hug as the others made their way over.

“ You decided to join the land of the living, I see,” Sev commented as he reached his friend.

“ I did indeed. How long was I out?” he asked.

“ About six hours,” Remus told him, “ We decided to let you rest while we set up camp, as we didn’t want to try and heal you while you were unconscious.”

“ Good thinking,” Harry said, looking at the ground as he realised what his body needed to heal itself. Seeing his distraught look, the rest of the group realised what had him down. He was a vampire. He needed blood. He was just too polite and ashamed to ask for it. He didn’t need it most of the time, which meant that the problem rarely arose, but after losing a lot of blood like he had over the last week, he needed to replenish his supplies. Without a second thought, Glen knelt down in front of his father and tilted his head to one side. Harry looked up at the younger Potter with an expression of surprise on his face.

“ Glen, are you sure? I...”

“ No, Dad, you need it. Just drink,” Glenadade said, tilting his head further and closing his eyes tightly. Harry, touched, gently took hold of his son’s head with trembling hands and brought his mouth up to the unblemished neck. With one last worried look at the others, he closed his own eyes and gently bit into the flesh. As the hot blood welled out of the wound and made its way down his throat, Harry let out a sigh of satisfaction as he sucked carefully. After a few minutes he let go and bit his own finger, letting a drop of his vampiric blood land on Glen’s wound, which sealed itself immediately. As the ancient boy pulled away, Harry collapsed back against the tree, a bit of colour finally filling his cheeks, making him look a lot less ill.

“ Thanks, I needed that,” he said, pulling his son into a tight hug.

“ You’re welcome, Dad,” Glen said, returning the embrace.

The others went about their business once more as Harry rested, the fresh blood working wonders on his injuries. Ginny stayed with him for a while, holding his hand and explaining what had been going on while he was asleep. According to her, Ron had wanted to heal Harry right away, but after over a week in captivity and the long hike the night before, he just wasn’t strong enough. Fawkes had arrived with their things two hours earlier, and ever since they had been securing the area and setting up camp. They didn’t want a repeat of the last

time. Ginny told Harry about how Remus had been quiet all day, and that Myleidi had been staring into space for well over an hour.

“ I think I should have a chat with Remus,” the young vampire said finally, after thinking over the events of the last twenty four hours.

“ Are you sure that’s wise?” his wife asked, to which the Boy-Who-Lived nodded his head. Standing up, Ginny went over to the distracted werewolf and sent him over to Harry. As the older man sat down, Harry shifted along a little and made room for him.

“ Hi Remus, how’s it going?” he asked.

“ Fine,” the werewolf replied, morosely.

“ Now Remus, I know you well enough to know when you’re lying. Now, what’s wrong?”

Remus looked up at his best friend’s son and his face crumpled. Placing his head in his hands, he began to sob. Harry gently brought the werewolf’s head to rest on his shoulder and wrapped an arm around the other man, rubbing soothing circles on his back. When Remus finally calmed down, Harry pulled away and waited for his friend to speak.

“ I’m sorry Harry, I don’t know what came over me. It’s just...since we’ve been here, everything seems to have gone wrong. I don’t know how you and the others managed to cope with this stuff when you were only fifteen. It’s hard enough for me, and I’m so much older than you...”

“ It gets better, Moony, really it does,” Harry comforted, “ When we first arrived in the time of the founders, we were completely lost. We didn’t speak the language, didn’t understand the customs, and were incredibly homesick. But we got past it. Eventually, we learned to accept that we had each other, and that was all that mattered. We had people with us that loved us and would support us. We made friends, and we learned all we could. At first, the situation was frightening, but once we learned to accept our circumstances, we were fine. It will be the same this time. I know we’ve had a rather large hiccup since we’ve been here, but it could have been worse!”

“ Worse!” Remus said wildly, “ Worse? How!?”

“ We could be dead,” Harry deadpanned.

“ Might as well be,” Remus muttered, “ After what I did.”

“ I see,” Harry said with a knowing smile, “ You feel guilty about the villagers you bit.”

“ Of course I do!” the older man said with a slight sob, “ I’ve never bitten anyone before! I’ve destroyed lives, I’ve made more werewolves, and they don’t even know how to defend themselves or control themselves! Snape also pointed out that for all I know they could be the first werewolves, from whom lycanthropy spread!”

Harry silenced the babbling werewolf with a simple gesture.

“ Remus, that’s enough,” he said, sternly, “ It’s not your fault! If it’s anyone’s fault, it’s the Elementals’. They captured us and prevented you from talking the Wolfsbane Potion! There was nothing you could have done to prevent what happened. And if they are the world’s first tribe of werewolves, so what? There are werewolves in the world in our time; they had to come from somewhere. I know it’s a paradox, but life is full of them. I’m my own ancestor, for Merlin’s sake! Don’t feel guilty over what you can’t control. You taught me that in the ‘70s when I was first bitten by that vampire. Remy, you have to accept this and move on with your life. We need you, please don’t give up now.”

After Harry’s passionate speech, Remus let out a loud sigh and thought over what the other man had said, finally realising that it made sense. It wouldn’t stop him feeling guilty, but as Harry had said, they had gotten through their first time travelling trip by sticking together, and he couldn’t let the group down. Feeling slightly better, he gave Harry a final hug before going to help the others.

For the next three days the group remained just inside the forest. After all, they had been tied to posts for over a week, and needed time to recover. Myleidi especially was weaker than the others, and spent most of her time sleeping and exercising to rebuild the wasted muscles she had gained from her long captivity. Remus had perked up a little since their arrival, but the others noticed he still held an air

of sadness about him. Despite this, he was always willing to intervene when Severus and Sirius got into another one of their arguments. No matter how much the others tried to discourage their conflicts, the two men found it simply impossible to get on with one another.

Harry had spent the quiet days by a nearby pool with his elven friend. They both had a lot of recovering to do, so they exercised together and built upon their previous friendship. Myleidi had grown to realise that Harry really wasn't evil, and that he really did have a pure soul under the Dark exterior. While they wiled away the hours together, they worked on their communication, making sure that they found a lot more words that their variations of the language had in common, and trying to learn the other's version. By the end of their time in their camp, the two could hold quite involved conversations.

By the end of the third day, the group was getting restless. Myleidi wanted to finish the journey she had been on, as she was starting to become really homesick. She hadn't seen the rest of her family in over a year, so she was looking forward to seeing them again. As the nine sat around the fire that night, Glenadade brought up the issue of moving on.

"Do you think we should stay here any longer?" he asked, "I mean, we know the Elementals are only a few hours away, and I for one really don't want to sit around in a dank forest for the next eleven months."

"Good point, Glen," Hermione agreed, "I think we should seriously consider moving on. I mean, we were going to head south anyway, and try to find some semblance of civilisation. We may as well make the most of the Indian summer and travel while the weather holds."

"Do we have any idea where we're going yet?" Ron asked.

"Now that we have some idea what time we're in, we can make better plans," Severus pointed out.

"If what Harry said is true and we're ten thousand years in the past, I doubt we're going to find anything larger than a group of primitive nomads. The great civilisations didn't appear until around the start of the Bronze Age," Remus interjected.

“ Not true,” Harry piped up, “ We can head to Egypt. Their magical culture is the oldest known one in the world. As I mentioned to you once back in 1975, the Muggle civilisation didn’t begin until much later, but the magical Egyptian culture began about eleven thousand years before our time. That means their civilisation has been around for about a thousand years. It’s nothing near as advanced as the Muggle Egyptians were, but I’m sure it’s the best we’re going to get at the moment.”

“ Are they welcoming to strangers?” Sirius asked, skeptical, “ I don’t want to travel over two and a half *thousand* miles to somewhere where they’ll kill us on sight and stick our heads on pikes!”

“ As much as I hate to admit it, the mutt has a point,” Sev said, “ We can’t just turn up and expect them to help us. After all, we’re a long time before the civil behaviour we’re used to.”

“ From what I found out about them during my work on the Prophecy of the Four, I believe they will be accommodating if we show them the proper respect. They won’t welcome us with open arms of course. No primitive culture is *that* trusting to outsiders, but I believe we can get through to them and at least gain access to their city,” Harry explained.

“ What about talking to them?” Glen asked, “ Hermione told us that the spells we have don’t work here...”

“ Harry speaks Ancient Egyptian,” Ginny said, surprising some of the others.

“ What!? How?” Remus asked.

“ I learned it a couple of years ago. Do you remember the trouble I had with the Prophecy of the Four? Voldie was translating it from Ancient Egyptian, and I couldn’t understand why he never used a translation spell. I started to learn some of the language so I could try and make a more accurate translation. It turned out he had done a pretty decent job, but I found the language fascinating, so I kept up my studies. I don’t think I could keep up with a native in a debate or anything, but I know enough to communicate with them.”

“ I remember that,” Hermione said, with a smile, “ I guess we finally found out the hard way why he didn’t use translation spells.”

“ Yeah, shame we didn’t think to look into it more before the trip. In all honesty, I’d completely forgotten,” Ron admitted.

“ Ah, the curse of hindsight,” Severus interjected with a smirk.

“ So, we’re settled, then,” Glen asked, “ We’re leaving tomorrow?”

“ We are. We’ll head south to the English Channel. I’m sure Ron and I can fly over it, each with at least one passenger. The others can either grab hold of Fawkes’ tail or use brooms,” Harry confirmed.

“ Are you sure you can fly that far?” Sirius asked, a little concerned.

“ Sure, it’s only 21 miles if we go from where Dover will be,” Harry replied, reassuring his godfather.

“ Where are we going after that?” his son asked.

“ We can head down through France and across through Germany and Austria. After that, we can either travel through Greece and sail from southern Greece to Crete and then to Egypt, or go around on land via Turkey. The first would be more direct, but I don’t know if we could get a boat. After all, there are no real seafaring craft built in this time. Turkey would take longer, but it would allow us to avoid crossing the Mediterranean Sea.”

“ We can work that out later, there’s no hurry,” Remus said, “ What about Myleidi, though?”

“ Her colony live in France, so we’ll probably be able to drop her off on the way,” Harry told him.

“ So, we’re settled then? We’re leaving in the morning?” Ron asked.

“ We are, so I suggest we go to bed,” his girlfriend agreed.

As the group made for bed, Harry quietly explaining to Myleidi what was going to happen, all of the time travellers’ thoughts dwelled on

the hard days to come. They knew it would be difficult travelling so far without transportation, especially with winter on the doorstep. They knew, though, that if they were to manage in this strange land they would have to be near civilisation, and Egypt was their best option. It was an ancient land, and a constant in their hectic world. Wherever they went in the next few years, it would be there.

Tomorrow, their search for civilisation would begin.

Chapter Eight – Journey to the River Elves

The group woke up at the first sign of dawn and packed up their camp. They didn't have much to do, as they had been arranging their bags for the last few days. The tents needed to be taken down and the pots and pans shrunk and placed inside the bag attached to Fawkes' leg. By the time everyone was ready, the sun was beginning to rise in the sky, causing Harry to duck into a well covered area to apply his skin protecting salve. Over the last few days, he and Severus had brewed as much of it as they could carry, making sure they would always have a good supply. Harry, though well rested and healed, still felt weak after the ordeal he had been through with the sun. In the long run, though, the experience had been a valuable lesson to the young vampire, showing him that no matter his power, he was still weak.

As soon as the entire camp was ready, Fawkes was laden with the last of the shrunken luggage and sent into the sky to fly ahead. The others transformed into their animagus forms, with the exception of Remus and Myleidi. The werewolf and the elf would be riding on the backs of Ron and Harry for part of the way. The group figured that they could cover more ground in their animagus forms, so they would do most of their travelling as animals. Ginny and Hermione would be flying with Fawkes, Severus, Sirius and Glen would be running together, and Ron and Harry, each with a passenger, would alternate between the two.

As soon as the sun was fully risen, they headed out of the forest and into the open countryside, Remus carrying their compass to make sure they were going in the right general direction. After all, they didn't want to hit the coast at the wrong place or they wouldn't be able to cross the water. They were relying on the strength of the strongest flyers, and if the sea they crossed was too wide they would never make it.

The first few hours of their journey were uneventful, each of the travellers settling into the pace and enjoying the countryside going past them. They stopped at regular intervals to rest, knowing that they were by no means indefatigable.

By the time the group stopped for their evening meal, they were exhausted. They had thought themselves relatively fit, but after the day's exertions, they realised that they were more out of shape than they had thought. Over the last couple of years, the original time travellers had been getting lax with their exercises, something Lord Gryffindor would never have approved of. Having collapsed on the ground where they stopped, the animagi watched tiredly as Remus and Myleidi took the chance to set up camp and prepare dinner. After all, they had spent the day riding on the backs of their friends, and hadn't actually had to move much.

After dinner, Harry lit a small fire and the group gathered around, chatting to each other about inconsequential things. Before they went to bed, Ginny poured them each a cup of hot chocolate and turned to her husband.

"Harry, how far do you think we made it today?"

The young vampire wrapped his arms around the fiery redhead and gave her a squeeze.

"I'm not sure, Gin. I'm hoping about thirty miles. If we are where we think we are, and we can keep the pace up, I don't see why we shouldn't reach the coast in the next couple of weeks. The hills and mountains will be the most problematic. It's alright for the flying animagi, but for those of us travelling by land, it'll take a lot longer to cover the distance."

"Why don't we get the brooms out?" Ginny suggested, "I mean, I know we decided against it, but do you really think anyone's going to be looking at the sky, and even if some primitive or Muggle did see us, they wouldn't know what we were anyway."

"True, but then you might get some native taking pot shots at us," Harry countered.

"Indeed, but the same could happen if they saw a flying horse or a pelican. I think it's a chance we're going to have to take. I know you managed it today, but you and Ron can't carry Remus and Myleidi indefinitely. You'll exhaust yourselves."

“ You’re right,” Harry conceded with a sigh, “ We’ll discuss it with the others in the morning. I’m sure they’ll have some input. It might be a good idea if Ron and I continue to carry people until we pass the mountains, though. The other land travellers can use brooms. We’ll get there a lot quicker that way.”

“ What’s the hurry?” Ginny asked, “ The further south we get, the longer the weather will hold. We can take our time.”

“ Gin, do you really want to spend a year travelling? Two and a half thousand miles is a long way to go, even in our time, let alone in an age where you have to get everywhere under your own steam.”

“ I suppose you’re right,” she said with a sigh, “ But I’m not looking forward to the journey.”

Harry pulled her close and kissed the top of her head.

“ Just try not to think of the journey, concentrate of the adventures that await us on the way.”

The next morning, the group awoke refreshed from their sleep. The efforts of the day before had tired them out, and they had all slept soundly. Even Severus who, after years of spying on Voldemort was a very light sleeper, had slept long and deeply. After a breakfast of vole toasted on the fire, and Harry letting Fawkes, Simbi and Nirah go off to hunt, the humans and elf packed up the camp. Harry pulled out the four brooms they had with them, and resized them back to normal. As soon as everything was packed away and tied to Fawkes’ leg, he let the bird go and called the others over.

“ Erm...guys, Gin had an idea last night, she reckons we should use the brooms, at least until w get past the mountains. We discussed it last night, and figured a native seeing a person on a broom was no weirder than them seeing a flying horse or leopard.”

“ Who’s using the brooms, then?” Glen asked.

“ It would make sense for Severus, Sirius, Glen and Remus to use the brooms,” Hermione declared, “ After all, Myleidi is the lightest for

Harry and Ron to carry, and if they alternate, they should have an easier time of it..”

The others nodded they head, agreeing with the clever witch. Ten minutes later, the group had taken their positions and was rising into the air, beginning the second leg of their long journey.

Nine days later, after going in a continuous south easterly direction, the group of exhausted time travellers and their elven companion finally made it to the coast. They had seen several rivers along their way, and had at one point crossed the Thames estuary, but it was a relief to them to finally have the English Channel stretched out in front of them. As they couldn't see the coast of France in the distance, despite it being a crystal clear day, they headed along the shore in an easterly direction until the white cliffs began to appear.

“ I've never seen the white cliffs of Dover before,” Sirius commented as they set up their camp at the base of the famous landmark.

“ Why am I not surprised,” Severus muttered under his breath, earning him a reproaching look from Harry and a steady glare from Sirius.

“ If you have something to say, Snivellus, say it to my face,” the dog animagus snarled, “ Or are you too much of a Slytherin coward?”

“ Oh, a coward am I Black?” Sev sneered, “ I suppose going out and risking my life was cowardly compared to the mighty Sirius Black, master of sitting on his arse in his dank prison cell. Spying is such a safe job when compared to a professional slacker.”

“ Why, you...” Sirius grated out before lunging at the Potions Master. Before he could reach the other man, Remus stepped in front of his friend and pulled him to one side, angrily berating him. At the same time Harry was glaring fiercely at Severus.

“ Why do you have to provoke him like that?” he snarled, “ The pair of you are like a couple of two year olds.”

“ He started it,” Sev said childishly.

“ No, he didn’t,” Harry countered, “ He was merely commenting that he had never been here before. That is no justification for barbed comments. I’ve never been here before either. Does that mean you would automatically insult me?”

“ No,” Sev replied, sheepishly. He hated it when Harry was disappointed in him. Even though he was older than the other man by twenty years, he still cherished his friend’s approval.

“ Well then. Stop it.”

“ Yes, Mother,” Sev muttered, immediately regretting it. Harry gave him a dark look and stormed off. Severus immediately deflated. Harry was right, he was being childish, and his friend didn’t deserve that. With a sigh, he flopped down on the ground and glared at the fire they had built. A few minutes later, a hesitant Myleidi sat down next to him and smiled shyly.

“ What do you want?” the spy said listlessly.

“ Y-you sad,” the elf said, brokenly. Sev looked at her in surprise, not having expected a reply. After all, up until that point, Harry had been the only one to speak to the pretty elf. Despite the efforts of the more sociable people in the group, she had shown no sign of understanding English, or any of the other languages they had tried. The bastardised version of elvish she and Harry had created was their only form of communicating with her.

“ So, you *do* speak English,” Sev replied with one delicate eyebrow raised. The elf blushed lightly and nodded slightly.

“ I hear,” she said slowly, “ I say. Get gooder.”

“ Better,” Sev corrected.

“ Better,” she repeated with a nod, absorbing the new word. She smiled at him shyly, and his lips twitched slightly in return.

“ You sad?” she repeated, bringing Severus’ thoughts back to the fight with Harry.

“ I disappointed my best friend,” he explained to his companion,
“ He’s the only person I’ve ever trusted implicitly.”

The last word gained him a confused look, so he tried to rephrase it.

“ I trust Harry. He’s the only one I trust. The others, I trust a little, but not completely. Some of them I don’t trust at all. Do you understand?”

“ Yes,” she said with a smile, “ You trust me?”

Severus looked closely at the river elf sitting next to him. She had such an open, expressive face, and he couldn’t help but smile slightly back at her, even though the action seemed foreign to him.

“ Yes, I trust you,” and he meant it. She seemed so pure and innocent, and had never given him any reason not to trust her. She had placed her faith in Harry, much as he had done all those years ago, and that said a lot about her character. Severus had always been good at judging people, a trait that had saved his life on more than one occasion, and as far as he was concerned, Myleidi was special.

When the camp awoke the following morning, there was a flurry of excited activity. The crossing of the Channel proved a great milestone in their journey. They still had a long way to go, but leaving Britain made them feel that much closer to their goal. For Myleidi, it signified her return to her homeland. Even though the river elves lived on the far side of what would one day be called France, right near the Alps, she still felt as if she was getting closer to home.

As soon as the sun rose over the horizon, the camp was packed up and the group was ready to go. Glen, Sirius, Severus and Remus mounted their brooms while Harry, Ginny and Ron changed into their animagus forms. It was decided that Ginny would most likely manage the 21-mile crossing, as would Harry and Ron, but Hermione in her owl form would struggle. Hermione would therefore be riding on Ron, while Harry took Myleidi.

Five hours later, the exhausted group finally collapsed on the cliffs of France, breathing heavily and shivering from the cold. As October had arrived, the temperature at night and in the early morning had begun to drop, especially at high altitude.

“ I’m never going to be warm again,” Glenn announced when they’d recovered somewhat.

“ I’m never going to move again,” Ron groaned, curling up into a ball in a vain attempt at warming himself up.

“ It could have been worse,” Hermione declared, “ You could have collapsed before we made it here and plunged us into the sea. I know it’s only October, but I bet the sea is freezing.”

“ ‘Mione, stop being a pessimist,” her boyfriend groaned, “ You’ll only depress us.”

“ I’m not being a pessimist, Ronald,” Hermione huffed, “ I’m being a realist. I’m not so sure this venture was such a good idea. We’ve been travelling for nearly two weeks, and we’ve only just made it to mainland Europe. Not only do we still have a whole continent to cross, we also have to get to the other side of the Mediterranean Sea and into Africa.”

“ Well, if we weren’t depressed before, we certainly are now!” Glen exclaimed, “ Honestly, *women!*”

“ Glenadade Harold Potter, I can’t believe you just said that!” the outraged witch yelled, gaining everyone’s attention.

“ Now, now, children, don’t bicker,” Remus said with a smile, earning him a glare from all of the younger witches and wizards. Holding up his hands in surrender, he smiled at them and joined Sirius in building a fire.

An hour later they were on their way again. Now that they knew roughly where they were, their map of Europe was a lot more useful. They had spent their recovery time well, plotting a course and setting out targets for each day. When they finally moved off, Remus, Harry, Ron and Ginny were taking a turn on the brooms. After their long flight across the sea, they felt as if they deserved a rest. Sirius, Glenadade and Severus ran along the ground, the youngest Potter carrying Myleidi on his back. Hermione, now able to assume her owl form without risk of over exhaustion, flew next to the brooms.

When the vast mountain range known in their time as the Alps finally came into view, the time travellers let out whoops of joy. It had taken them a further two and a half weeks to cross the main part of France, and now that their goal was in sight they were beyond relieved. Myleidi, sitting on Harry's back, joyfully began to sing a loud elven song of victory, normally reserved for returning armies.

The last leg of their journey to the elven settlement had gone slower than they would have liked, mainly due to the full moon. Remus had been out of it for a couple of days either side of his transformation, despite the Wolfsbane Potion, so they had set up camp for the duration. The rest had been well earned, and they had attacked the last few days of their journey with renewed enthusiasm.

As they neared the bottom of the mountains, the land-based animagi took to the skies once more with the brooms, and the group soared over the jagged peaks, marvelling at the amazing sight of snow littering the mountaintops. The scenery was second to none, and they were awed by the natural beauty spread out before them.

Eventually, Harry banked to one side, following Myleidi's directions and leading the group around a particularly large mountain, following a rough path through the pass. As they rounded another corner and dived over a cliff face, they saw the spectacular sight of the elven settlement set out before them. The entire mountainside was dotted with small villages, all identical in structure. The buildings melted into the snow flawlessly, appearing as crystalline spun glass towers rising out of the rock. The overall effect was of a field of upside down icicles.

Doing as the she-elf said, Harry landed at the edge of one of the smaller villages low down in the pass, on the banks of a small river. The others all followed, setting down on the snow and looking about themselves in awe. Each of the buildings rose into the sky above them, shimmering in the bright sunlight. Elves of all ages ran out of their homes to greet the strangers, taking in the form of Myleidi and hugging her tightly. What must have been her family surrounded the young elf, all talking excitedly and calling over their friends. The time travellers waited patiently off to one side, feeling a little awkward. Eventually, some of the other elves made their way over to the strangers and started whispering to each other. Myleidi, realising she

had forgotten about her travelling companions, the people who had seen her home, turned to the rest of her village and called for silence. Talking rapidly in her own dialect, she introduced the people who had saved her life. She then walked back to the group of humans, a shy smile on her face, and addressed them in stilted English.

“ Welcome of Lanith’il.”

Chapter Nine – Savage Neighbours

The snow glistened on the mountaintop, sending a myriad tiny rainbows flitting across the landscape. The craggy rocks breaking the pristine white lent a hint of character to the otherwise barren scene. The shining crystal towers of the elven settlement blended with the snowy wonderland, giving the effect of a fairy tale. There was only one word to describe the village of Lanith'il. Magical.

Severus Snape looked out across the mountains and let out a deep sigh. It was beautiful. The snow, the mountains, the elven buildings. Perfection. The peace he had found in this place was like nothing he had ever felt before. All of his life, he had felt out of place in the wizarding world. Trying to please his father, keeping his soul from damnation, spying and lying to those he cared about. Harry had ended the war, but he was still seen as 'the reformed Death Eater'. Here, though, he was just Severus. With a snort of ironic amusement, he realised that he finally understood how Harry felt as the 'Boy-Who-Lived'. He had spent hours moaning to Severus about wanting to be normal. Wanting to be 'just Harry'. Now Severus was in a position to sympathise.

Myleidi was part of the peace he had been feeling. Over the ten days he had been in Lanith'il he had been spending a lot of time with the young she-elf. Her English was rapidly improving, and he was even starting to pick up a few words of her elven dialect. The rest of the group had spent their days planning the next leg of their journey, and getting to know the other river elves, but Severus had felt rather detached from the others. Black and Lupin didn't help matters any, especially the mangy mutt. Harry, his only real friend amongst the time travellers, was too busy talking to the elves, playing the leader, and spending time with his wife to bother with the greasy Potions Master. It was at times like this that Sev realised that despite his maturity, Harry was still twenty years his junior. It was sad to think that the only friend he had was little more than a child. Before, he had always had Albus, but since the elderly headmaster's death he had been spending more and more time in solitude. Myleidi filled the gap in his soul. She talked to him for him, not because of any duty to the ex-spy.

Their time in Lanith'il had passed far too quickly for Severus' liking. They would have to move on soon if they were to reach the coast before the end of November. They were due to leave at the end of the week, having gathered some necessary supplies from their elven hosts.

As Severus watched the watery autumn sun turn a fiery red in the sky in front of him and begin its slow journey below the silhouetted mountains, he heard the faint sounds of screams coming from the direction of the village. Whipping his head around, he saw a nightmare unfolding. His wanderings earlier in the day had taken him to a cliff ledge several miles above the settlement, giving him a great view. Unfortunately, what he saw was a disaster in progress. He watched in unrestrained horror as a colony of giants descended on the fairy tale scene, swinging their massive clubs back and forth, scattering elves and smashing the delicate towers of the buildings. Regaining his senses, he apparated back to the village amid chaos and panic. Seeing Hermione rushing towards him, he grabbed her by the arm and yelled at her over the noise.

“What in Merlin's name is going on?!”

Hermione gave him a glazed look before shaking her head and answering.

“Giants...from the mountains...don't know where they came from...” she panted, before turning to a nearby foe and letting loose a string of curses. Looking around at the rallying elven warriors, Sev joined the fray, hexing everything over ten feet tall. The giants, spotting the new threat, lumbered in his direction. Severus, worried, sought out the other witches and wizards. He could see the elves all around him trying to repel the attack with their own magics, but he wasn't really familiar with their methods. He was more comfortable with human magic, and so would be more effective if he could locate the rest of his group.

Seeing Glen and Sirius defending a group of elven children he made his way over, shifting to his animagus form as he went. His form had a lot of teeth, which was a good way of causing a lot of damage in a short amount of time. As he leapt at the nearest giant and sank his

teeth into its tree trunk-like leg, he saw the elflings scream out of the corner of his eye. But it wasn't the giants that were scaring them. It was him. Closing his eyes briefly, he blocked the image of the cowering children from his mind as it brought up too many disturbing memories of his time as a spy, and concentrated on the matter at hand.

Twenty minutes later, six of the giants had been taken down, and the rest were beginning to retreat. The warriors collapsed to the ground in exhaustion and relief. The battle was over.

Severus, after resting in the snow for a few minutes, changed back into his human form and went in search of the others. A niggling feeling of worry filled the pit of his stomach. The bodies of elves littered the ground, and several houses had collapsed or were on fire. Making his way to the nearest human form, he kicked his unfortunate victim in the ribs, causing him to elicit a loud groan.

"What was that for, Snape?!"

"I was just making sure you were still alive, Black," Severus sneered.

"Yeah, sure you were," Sirius groaned and sat up, rubbing his chest and scowling at his nemesis. Sev glared back.

"Now that we are no longer in mortal peril, would you mind explaining what in Hades just happened?"

"We were attacked by giants," Sirius responded slowly, as if speaking to a simpleton. Severus rolled his eyes.

"I gathered that, Black. What I meant was why were we attacked?"

"Buggered if I know," the former convict grumbled, pushing himself to his feet unsteadily and swaying dangerously. With a resigned sigh Severus reached out and steadied his enemy.

"That's not a lot of help, Black."

"Well, I'm sorry, your highness, but I don't know everything!" Sirius scowled.

“ Really?” Sev smirked, “ I seem to remember when we were students you thought you did.”

“ Just because I got away with anything doesn’t mean I knew everything, Snivellus. Just more than you.”

“ Oh, I doubt that, Black. You got away with attempted murder because you were one of Albus’ beloved Gryffindors, not because you had an ounce of brain in that thick head of yours.”

“ You wish, Snape.”

“ Wow, that was a truly original comeback. Think that up just now or have you been saving it for a special occasion?”

Sirius’ face darkened, and he took a swing at the Slytherin. Unfortunately, he was still unsteady on his feet, and the action caused him to fall backwards onto the ground. Severus couldn’t help it. He burst out laughing.

“ Severus!” came a shocked voice from behind him, immediately sobering the Potions Master. Looking at the speaker, he couldn’t help but look contrite at the expression on Harry’s face.

“ What the Hell do you think you’re doing?” a furious half vampire yelled, “ I hardly think this is a time to be laughing!”

Sev looked around at the scene around him. The elves were gathering their dead, and some of them were giving him poisonous looks. Immediately he felt remorseful. Harry was right; this wasn’t the time for laughter.

“ Sorry,” he muttered, unable to look his friend in the eyes.

“ So you should be,” Harry said, crossing his arms across his chest.

“ What happened?” the Potions Master asked, hoping his young friend would know more than his school rival.

“ The local giant colony attacked. From what I can gather, they’ve been trying to take over this land for years. It’s just unfortunate that

they chose today to try another takeover. Now, if you've stopped being an arse, I suggest you help to put out some of the fires."

Severus nodded and made his way to the nearest burning building, waving his hands and causing a tiny rain cloud to appear, dousing the flames. He made his way around the village mechanically, taking in the devastation. Only an hour ago this had been a winter wonderland. Now it was a disaster scene. It brought back unpleasant memories of many Death Eater raids. Too many. The screams of innocents, the smell of burning flesh, the bodies littering the ground. As he reached the next collapsed house, he was dragged rudely from his thoughts by an agonising wailing. Looking to the elf collapsed in front of the building, he was shocked to see it was Myleidi. Numbness filled him as he took in his surroundings. It was his elven friend's house.

" Myleidi!" he exclaimed, running over and kneeling on the ground, pulling the sobbing woman into a warm embrace. She wrapped her arms around his neck and clung on tightly, as if she was scared he would disappear.

" My...family...dead..." she gasped, and Severus tightened his grip.

" I'm so sorry, Myleidi," she whispered, rocking her gently as she poured out her grief.

The next two days passed in a blur for the inhabitants of Lanith'il. They had suffered many similar attacks over the years, and every time they had to rebuild it tore at their spirits. Their population was dwindling, they all knew it, but the mountain was their home, and they would never abandon it. The time travellers did what they could to help with the dead and injured, but they were well aware of the fact they were outsiders. With the elves in their own time they were a lot more comfortable offering help and joining them in their mourning. Here, though, in a society where outsiders were seen as suspicious, even a welcoming community needed their own space. Many of the elves were in a state of deep grief, and there was nothing the humans could do to help them.

Myleidi had been one of the worst affected. Her entire family had been wiped out when her home collapsed, and she was quite literally alone. Harry was convinced that if it weren't for Sev, who had been

like a rock for her, then she would likely have died of grief, as was not uncommon for elves. The Potions Master had become a good friend to her, and the young vampire could see that he was the one person who could help the she-elf to recover. With this in mind, he made his way to the doors of the village council chambers, intent on seeking out the village elders. Knocking on the heavy wooden doors, he waited to be admitted. With an acknowledging call, he entered and formally bowed to the gathered elders.

“ Harry Potter,” their leader said with a tense smile, “ How may we help you?”

“ I have a question,” he replied with his limited knowledge of their pronunciation. He had to choose his words carefully, as his vocabulary was narrow, “ Can Myleidi leave?”

“ How do you mean?” the elder asked.

“ Well...” Harry said, before coming to a grinding halt. Frustrated that he couldn't find the words to articulate what he wanted to say, he formed a mental connection with the leader and sent a mental picture of the written words, much like he had done at first with Myleidi. The elder was startled at first by the mental intrusion, but soon calmed. When she realised that Harry wanted Myleidi to go with them when they left, she considered the matter carefully and discussed it with her peers. Eventually, they reached an agreement and the leader turned back to the waiting human.

“ She may go, if she agrees.”

Harry let out a long sigh of relief and nodded his thanks, before leaving to talk to the rest of the group.

Harry found Myleidi with Severus up on the Potion Master's favourite cliff. They were quietly talking, and Sev had his arm around her delicate shoulders. When Harry appeared behind them, they both jumped slightly in fright, not having heard him approach.

“ Hi guys,” he said, dropping to the ground next to the young elf, “ I've been looking for you everywhere.”

“ I brought Myleidi up here to see the view,” Sev admitted, “ I love it up here, and she needed to get away from the village for a while. The memories were getting to her.”

“ Understandable,” the vampire said with a nod, before looking the elf in the eyes and switching to the hybrid language they had created, “ Speaking of memories, Myleidi, I was wondering if you would like to come with us.”

“ Go with you where?” she asked in confusion.

“ To Egypt. You’re unhappy here now; I can see the memories are smothering you. You need a break. Even if you don’t come with us into the future when we leave, you can at least escape the village for a while. Give yourself time to heal. I know you have made friends with Severus, and he is helping you work through your grief. We’re leaving tomorrow, and I know that if you stay here, you will let your grief destroy you. Let him help you.”

The conversation dropped into silence as the elf thought over what Harry had said to her. It made a lot of sense to her. She was becoming rather attached to the dour Potions Master, despite him being a human, and there was nothing here for her any more. Sure, she had the other elves, but they would all be wrapped up in their own grief and rebuilding efforts. She had no family left, and no home. She had always been an adventurer at heart, going on various journeys into the unknown. Before, though, she had always been alone on her wanderings. The chance to see a distant land with people from the future was a tempting offer. Turning to Severus, she asked him his opinion. After all, if he didn’t want her...

“ Severus?”

“ Yes, Myleidi?”

“ You want me come with you?”

Severus looked at her in confusion for a second, not understanding. After all, he hadn’t understood what Harry had said to her.

“ You want me come to Egypt with you?”

Understanding, his eyes widened in surprised, before a genuine smile broke out over his face.

“ I’d like nothing better.”

“ Are you sure it’s wise, Harry?” Hermione asked when the Boy-Who-Lived broke the news to the rest of the group.

“ I don’t see why not. I mean, she’s been through an ordeal here, and she just wants to forget. Going on one of our adventures will certainly take her mind off things. We’ve all lost people over the years. Gallatea, Ardwick, Christabel, Persephone, James, Lily. We miss them all, but for her it’s her whole family. Four generations. I can’t even begin to imagine what she’s going through. Can you?”

“ No, I suppose not,” the bushy haired girl conceded, “ But you have to remember the time paradox problem.”

“ What time paradox problem? She has no family. If she stays here, her grief will kill her. A broken heart kills elves. They wither away until they give up and cease to live if they allow their grief to consume them. They are very emotional beings. If she stays here, she’ll die. I know she will. If she comes with us, she has a chance of living. You can’t say we’re changing the timeline, as all we’re doing is saving a life. It won’t have future repercussions in terms of people ceasing to exist, as she would never have children anyway. If we hadn’t interfered in the first place, she would have died at the hands of the Elementals.”

“ You have a point, Dad, but I don’t see how we can make exceptions for her. I mean, you loved my mother, and you left her!”

Harry winced, and looked at the floor. His son had a point, but the way he had said it hurt. He would always regret what happened to Gallatea, but there was nothing he could do to change it. He had grown up a lot since that time, they all had, and they were in a better position to make the best decision this time around.

“ Personally, I think it’s a good idea,” Remus said, breaking the tension in the room, “ Myleidi would be a great asset to us. She sees the world from the current perspective. Despite being an elf, and a

different species to the ones we intend to meet up with, she knows the world as it stands far better than we do. She knew about the Elementals, what they were and some of their customs. These are things we could never know ourselves. I believe we are far more likely to reach our destination in one piece if we have her with us. And anyway, Severus seems to have become rather attached to her.”

“ Just what we need, Snape with a crush,” Sirius muttered, earning him an agreeing look from Ron and glares from the rest of the group.

“ Why don’t we vote on it?” Ginny asked diplomatically.

“ It would be the best way to settle it,” Hermione agreed.

“ Alright, all those in favour, raise your hand,” Remus said, raising his hand. Ginny, Harry and Ron all raised their hands.

“ That settles it, then,” Harry said, “ Severus wants her to go, so it’s five against three. She’s coming with us. We leave tomorrow.”

Chapter Ten – When Cultures Collide

The following morning, the travellers woke bright and early, ready to leave the elven settlement soon after breakfast. Packing up their bags, they stored all of their possessions in their bags, and shrunk as much of it as possible. Fawkes was an invaluable companion when it came to carrying the luggage. They wouldn't have been able to bring nearly as many supplies if it wasn't for the phoenix. Of course, they could shrink things, but they could still only carry so much. The majestic bird could carry weights far superior to any of the travellers, and was perfectly willing to help out. Myleidi had been fascinated by Fawkes from the first time she had seen him. Phoenixes were originally from the elven world, and as a small child she had heard stories of the magical creatures in her ancestral homeland, but had never dreamt she would ever see one in real life.

As soon as the breakfast dishes were cleared away, it was time for the group to say a final farewell to the river elves. They had been good hosts for the travellers, a welcome oasis of peace in a hostile world. Saying goodbye was hard, especially knowing they would be leaving the elves with the huge task of rebuilding their homes in the wake of the giant attack. Myleidi especially found it difficult to leave the home she had always known. Of course, she wanted to go with the time travellers, but she still felt as if she was abandoning her lifelong friends.

“ Go now, Myleidi,” one of the elders eventually told her, a gentle hand on her shoulder pushing her away from the village, “ You know you wish to leave. We will still be here if you ever wish to return. You have the independence of a wolf, and the spirit of a soaring eagle. You will never be truly happy here, no matter how much you wish to stay. You have a free soul, Myleidi, see the world that these humans are offering. No matter what, you will always have a home here. Always.”

Tears streaming down her face, the younger elf wrapped the elder in a tight embrace, before pulling away and joining her travelling companions.

“ I’m ready,” she said in English with a watery smile. Severus gave her a brief hug.

“ It’ll be alright, Myleidi. If you want to return, I shall escort you.”

The elf gave him a weak smile in return, and in the background Sirius gave a snort of derision.

“ Never thought I’d see the day when Snivellus got himself a girlfriend,” he muttered.

“ Shut up Sirius,” Remus admonished, “ I think he deserves some happiness after all he’s been through.”

“ Death Eaters don’t deserve to be happy,” the animagus growled.

“ Neither do convicted murderers,” Remus replied, darkly, before stalking away. Sirius’ enmity towards the Potions Master was starting to grate on the werewolf’s nerves. He had been friends with Sirius for a long time, but he was tiring of the constant conflict with Severus. He himself had set aside old grudges years ago, but the other Marauder seemed unable to do so. If anything, Sirius was getting worse, and the thought frightened him.

“ Come on, everybody,” Harry called from a short distance away, “ We need to leave now if we want to reach the edge of the mountains by nightfall. We’re pushing our luck as it is, and if we dally any longer we’ll certainly not make it.”

That said, he turned towards the south and changed into his animagus form, spreading his wings wide and preparing to launch off the precipice. The others said their final goodbyes and prepared to leave as well. Adopting the arrangement they had used to travel before, the group members launched themselves into the sky, Fawkes taking the lead as usual. Within a few minutes, they were leaving the elven settlement behind and disappearing over the top of the mountains.

“ So, where are we actually heading?” Ron asked that night at dinner. The group had made good time over the course of the day, and had finally reached the edge of the Alps. The mountains lay at their backs,

and what would one day be Italy stretched out before them. Their plan thus far had consisted of heading south, but they were at a crossroads. There were three directions they could go, each with their own dangers and merits. Choosing the best route would be vital if they wanted to eventually reach Egypt in one piece.

“ Egypt, ultimately,” Severus drawled with a smirk, earning him a scowl from the redhead.

“ You know what I mean, Snape. Are we going to go through Greece or Turkey?”

“ Italy might be a better choice,” Hermione suggested, “ I know we’d decided on Greece or Turkey, but the way I see it, if we go through Turkey, it’ll take us at least an extra two months. Greece is still a viable option, but if we go that way, we’ll have to pass over a lot of mountains. Mountainous regions are good for cover, but don’t make the best camps. It would also hinder the land based animagi. If we go down the east coast of Italy, we avoid the mountains and Sirius, Severus and Glen will be able to travel over the ground.”

“ Italy’s good in that respect, but what about crossing the Mediterranean?” Remus asked.

“ We would have three options once we reached southern Italy,” she explained, “ We can go through Sicily and over to Tunisia, which would cut down the amount of sea travel, but would mean we would have to go the long way by land. It’s not really any better than going via Turkey.”

“ We’ll dismiss that one, then,” Harry interjected.

“ I would say so,” Hermione agreed, “ That leaves sailing to Greece and travelling over land to the furthest point south, then going via Crete, or going from the heel of Italy and sailing down the Greek coast. It would save acquiring a second boat, and we could go ashore for supplies. We would be able to rest more that way as well.”

“ The last option certainly seems the best,” Ginny said, “ It’s the most direct way, and I must admit I’ll be ready for the rest after so long travelling. It’s been a month already, and we’re looking at another

month to get to the south of Italy. The brooms help, but it's a long way."

"Gin's right. We can't keep this up indefinitely. I'm surprised we made such good time on the way down here," Harry agreed.

"So we're settled, then?" Severus asked, "We're heading through Italy?"

"Looks that way," Glen said, "I suggest we get some sleep. We have a long way to go, and I for one need some sleep."

The trip through Italy was surprisingly easy. For the first two weeks passed quickly and without incident. They would wake up every morning and set off across the land, following the coast for the most part. The weather was good for the time of year, and they made good time. The breeze from the sea made it easier for the flying animagi to stay in the air, and the journey was decidedly pleasant.

Sixteen days after leaving the river elves, they encountered their first signs of civilisation. From the style of the buildings, they determined them to be of elven origin. The flying animagi, who were slightly ahead of the rest of the group, doubled back as soon as they saw the settlement and called a halt. After their experiences with the Elementals they didn't want to go rushing in expecting them to be welcoming to outsiders. Once everyone had caught up, they spread out around the settlement, casting disillusionment charms on themselves and Myleidi. The elf seemed a little uneasy when she saw the buildings, but she didn't say anything.

The group spent the rest of the day scouting out the village, meeting that night to discuss what they had found out. Glen had been left to set up camp earlier in the day, and he had chosen a well hidden spot in a small wood. Wards had been set up around the perimeter of their encampment to keep out any hostiles.

"So, what did we discover?" Harry asked when they were all sitting down with a light chicken stew.

"They're elves of some sort," Ron replied, digging into his food greedily, "They have pointy ears, and I recognised some of the

magic they were using. It's the sort of thing I've seen Minh and Lolide use."

"Anything else," the vampire asked.

"There are other beings there as well," Sirius informed them, "But I don't recognise the species."

Severus was about to make a snide comment, but was silenced by a glare from Harry.

"What did they look like, Siri?" his godson asked him.

"Kinda short, about two heads shorter than the elves. They have long pointed ears that protrude from the side of their heads, and shiny dark blue hair. Their skin seemed to be light brown with a pale blue hue to it. They were funny looking things. Strangest thing, though, was that they all seemed to be servants..."

"Are you sure?" Hermione said with a frown, "That doesn't sound good."

Myleidi, who had been silent up until that point, suddenly spoke up.

"They bad elves," she said, "They banished."

"What do you mean, Myleidi?" Severus asked, sharply.

"They part my group," she said with a frown, "They bad. They made to leave. They hurt."

The group was confused, and Myleidi was frustrated. She knew what she wanted to tell her friends, she just didn't know how to use their language to articulate it. Even though elves were quick to pick up languages, it still took time. Although she understood much of what they were saying, she still found it hard to find the words to reply.

"What are you trying to say?" Harry asked in the elven hybrid dialect.

"They were part of our settlement, but we banished them an age ago. Some of our number wanted to make war. The rest of us wanted

peace. Most elves are pacifists, but they were not like us. We banished them when they crossed a line.”

“ What did they do?” Harry asked, intrigued.

“ They made war with another race, the Ash’ren, and conquered them.”

“ Are they the creatures Sirius saw?”

“ Yes, they are. They conquered their race and took them as slaves. The Ash’ren now live to serve the marine elves.”

“ Marine elves?”

“ Yes, they renamed themselves after they settled here. They fish the sea, and build boats. They have much influence in this part of the world. My people severed all ties with them, but from what we have heard from nomadic people passing through our lands, the marine elves are still a violent and war-like people. We should avoid them if possible.”

Harry pondered what he had been told, and quickly passed on the information to the rest of the group, who had been waiting patiently for an explanation.

“ They have boats?” Hermione asked, “ Are they seaworthy? Would they get us to Greece?”

“ Yes,” Myleidi said with a frown, “ But they not trade.”

“ Are you sure?” Hermione said, “ If we can get them to give us a boat, it would save us a lot of time and trouble. Elven structures are usually well made, so I’m sure they’ll have something suitable.”

“ They not trade,” Myleidi insisted, “ They bad elves. They kill.”

“ If we handle it right we should manage it,” Remus interjected, “ No culture is completely against trade. There is always something that one group has that the other doesn’t.”

“ But in this case, we have nothing to trade,” Ron pointed out.

“ We have skills and knowledge from the future that they will not have available to them now. I’m sure we can find something useful that they’ll want,” Ginny countered.

“ It’s worth a try, but I’m not prepared to send anyone in to talk to them without knowing exactly what we’re facing,” Harry said, “ So if anyone has any suggestions, let’s hear them.”

Send the snakes, Dumbledore’s voice suggested in Harry’s head. The young vampire jumped in surprise. The deceased headmaster had been silent for weeks, and Harry had forgotten he was there.

“ Dumbledore suggests I send Simbi and Nirah, what do you guys think?” he asked the rest.

“ Sounds good, Harry,” Ron agreed, “ They can probably avoid being seen, and if not they can at least blend in or hide.”

“ I’ll ask them,” the elder Potter replied, pulling his sleeves up.

Simbi? Nirah? I need a favour

What can we do for you? Simbi replied.

Could you scout out the elves’ camp for us? We need to know everything there is to know about them

Of course. We’ll let you know in the morning

Thank you Harry said, lowering his wrists to the ground and letting the snakes slip off into the darkness.

The next morning, the group woke up early as usual. Simbi and Nirah had returned in the early hours of the morning, and had woken Harry up to give him their report. The elves and Ash’reen had all gone to bed, so there was little reason for them to hang around. They told him how the elves had gone about their evening meal, the Ash’reen doing all of the cooking and clearing up. Afterwards, the blue haired creatures had gone about tidying up the camp and preparing the fishing boats

for the next day. Harry had surmised from what the snakes had said that the Ash'ren did all of the manual labour in the village. They were slaves in the truest sense of the word, with no freedom or rights of any kind.

When the travellers were all awake and breakfasted, they gathered next to the camp so Harry could update them.

“ Well, from what the snakes have told me, the elves are pretty peaceful most of the time. They fish, they eat, they train their warriors in a training ring on the outskirts of the town. The Ash'ren do all of the physical work. The women stay at home with the children, but are also trained warriors.”

“ How did Simbi and Nirah find all that out simply from watching them sleep?” Sirius asked incredulously.

“ They have their sense of taste, of course,” Harry said condescendingly, earning him a frown from Hermione, “ They can tell how recently the training ring was used, by what species and which gender. The same goes for other areas of the camp.”

“ That makes sense, I suppose,” Sirius answered, glaring at his godson.

“ So what do we do now?” Glen asked, “ Do we just walk in there and ask for a boat?”

“ We should leave at least one person here to guard the camp and provide backup,” Remus suggested, “ We don't want to put all our eggs in one basket, and if we're staying here more than one night, we don't want to be packing and unpacking all of our things just so we can take them with us.”

“ The first thing we should decide is who has to go,” Hermione put forward sensibly.

“ I need to go,” Harry answered, “ And Myleidi would be useful. We are the only ones that will be able to communicate with them. I'll take Gin and Sev for backup. That'll leave five people here in case anything goes wrong.”

“ It’s settled then,” the Potions Master concluded, “ Let’s go.”

Before the group set off for the village, Harry and Ginny went into their tent and prepared for battle. The theory was that if the elves turned out to be hostile, they would have a means of defending themselves. The presence of their weapons would also show the elves that they meant business, and were not going to be pushovers. Harry strapped his sword to his back and hid several sharp knives about his person. His elven bow was hanging from his shoulder, with the quiver of arrows easily accessible, and the lightweight elven armour from Lolide protected his chest. Ginny had likewise prepared for battle. Her own bow was slung over her shoulder, with her sword hanging from her side. When they finally exited their tent, they were met with the sight of Severus and Myleidi. The Potions Master had a sword at his side, much to Sirius’ amusement, and the elven maiden was dressed in one of her delicate dresses. She bore no weapons, but an aura of power surrounded her. She wasn’t happy about meeting with her distant relatives, but she wasn’t about to object.

“ Are we ready?” Ginny asked as she and her husband approached the waiting pair.

“ As we’ll ever be,” Sev muttered, before taking the lead and heading out of their encampment.

“ He doesn’t look too pleased to be going,” Ginny muttered to Harry as they took up the rear, letting Sev walk with Myleidi.

“ I don’t think he approves of us taking Myleidi along. She’d scared of these people, and I know Sev’s developing a soft spot for her.”

“ That much is glaringly obvious,” Ginny said with a snort, “ I’ve never seen him so smitten with anyone before.”

“ He’s been on his own a long time. As a Death Eater he would never let anyone get close to him. He was ashamed of the mark on his arm, and didn’t want to put anyone in danger. It’s about time he was happy.”

“ He deserves it, after all he’s done for the side of Light,” Ginny agreed, “ I just wish Sirius would leave off taunting him.”

“ I’ve told him to behave himself, but you know my godfather. He’ll never listen. He’s too stubborn,” Harry admitted with a sigh.

“ Are you sure it was a good idea to have them both come on this trip? I know we’ve only been here a couple of months, but they’ve been at each other’s throats the entire time. Their constant fighting will compromise the group eventually. And you *know* it.”

Harry sighed deeply, knowing his wife was right. Asking both his friend and godfather to come along was not the wisest course of action. However, he still clung to the hope that they would learn to get along. If they didn’t, then the results would be disastrous.

As the outskirts of the village came up, the Potters caught up to their friends and made their way down the main street, towards what appeared to be a town square. The little Ash’reen watched the strangers curiously as they passed, but did not dare to say anything. A contingent of warrior elves, who had spotted the visitors, started trailing behind them. Eventually the four arrived in the town centre and waited for one of the elves to address them. A few minutes later, an important looking elf stepped forward and spoke.

“ Who are you? What right have you to enter our settlement?”

Myleidi, after encouraging looks from her companions, stepped forward.

“ We come in peace, and respectfully request an audience with the Elders of this settlement. We humbly ask for permission to trade.”

The marine elf looked at the she-elf curiously yet suspiciously, before abruptly turning and stalking off to a large wooden hut. The minutes stretched by in a strained silence as the natives and visitors eyed each other warily. Eventually, the spokeself returned, a scowl on his face.

“ Your audience is granted. Follow me.”

That said, he stormed off towards the hut once more, with his guests following silently behind him. As they approached, the doors were pulled open by two tiny Ash’reen and held open as the group passed.

The inside of the hut was much like most elven council chambers, with the Elders seated in carved chairs before them. Severus and Ginny took up flanking positions next to their companions and waited tensely for trouble. Myleidi and Harry stepped forward slightly and performed the proper elven greetings. The elders looked at the human suspiciously, obviously wondering how a primitive of the time came to know so much about elven customs, and be in possession of elven weapons.

“ Speak, strangers, and make your case,” one eventually spoke up. Harry and Myleidi glanced at each other, before the elf stepped forward.

“ We are travellers on a great journey, and seek to trade for a boat,” she said nervously. One of the elders scowled at her.

“ How does one of the Children of Light come to be accompanied by heathen savages?”

“ Elder, I-I assure you, my companions are civilised,” she stuttered, not liking the direction the conversation was turning.

“ Your companions are of heathen blood. Their kind is of no consequence to us. Why should we trade with such filth?”

“ I assure you, respected Elder, we are not savages,” Harry interjected, a note of anger in his voice. These elves obviously thought themselves superior to the primitive humans of the time. The Elder seemed quite shocked when a human addressed him in his own tongue. During the exchange with Myleidi, the young vampire had managed to set up a weak mental connection to his friend. Much like the connection he maintained to help his son understand English, this one allowed him to temporarily speak the correct elven dialect to impress the marine elves.

“ You speak!” the Elder bellowed, shocked.

“ I do, honoured Elder. I am of human and elven blood. I know the customs of your people. I respectfully request a trade on behalf of myself and my companions.”

“ We do not trade with half blood scum,” another snapped, a disgusted look on her face.

“ That may be so,” Harry replied with a scowl, “ But we have much to offer you. Knowledge and skills not known to the elves.”

“ Preposterous!” yelled the eldest elf at the table, “ There is nothing we can learn from a heathen!”

“ Really?” the vampire asked with a smirk, before waving a hand lazily and incanting in elven. Immediately, the floor beneath the Elders began to buckle and turn liquid. They all let out yelps of fear as they gradually began to sink into the ground.

“ What magic is this!” one yelled, trying to climb onto the rapidly sinking table.

“ It is magic beyond your ken,” Harry grinned, “ And I can teach such things to your people. For a price. Will you trade?”

“ Yes! Just stop this madness!” the eldest shouted. With a small smile of amusement, Harry levitated the group out of the quicksand-like floor and solidified it, before setting them gently back on their feet.

“ Good,” he said, “ We need a boat. We plan to travel across the sea for a great distance, so we need something capable of such a feat. Do you have anything available?”

“ Most of our boats are small,” one decidedly ruffled elf stated, “ But we have several warships that would be suitable. We would be unwilling to trade our best warships, but we have one of older design which requires repairing. We could have our slaves make the repairs and would trade it for some of your knowledge. What would you offer in return?”

“ That sounds acceptable. In return, I offer medical magic and skills which would improve your methods of fishing. Do we have an agreement?”

The Elders thought over the proposition for a minute before agreeing to the terms. The work would be carried out immediately, and it

wouldn't take the Ash'ren more than a few days to make the repairs, during which time Harry would teach the elves some of the elven magic Lolide had taught him. He didn't want to give them anything of human origin, but felt that advanced elven magic would be a suitable trading commodity.

"Do you think they'll keep their end of the bargain?" Ginny asked on the way back to their camp.

"I should think so," Harry replied, "After all, elves are honourable creatures, even the bad ones."

"You wouldn't think it looking at the Ash'ren. How can they be so cruel as to enslave a whole people!" Ginny said, distressed.

"Well, it's a way of life in this time. We should have expected to run into slavery a lot sooner. If you want to complain about it, just think what these creatures remind you of."

"What's that?" Ginny asked, looking at her husband in confusion. He gave her a significant look before turning back to the road.

"House elves," he muttered, closing the conversation as Ginny drifted into a contemplative silence.

Chapter Eleven – Setting Sail

Three days after speaking to the elven council, Harry awoke to find a pair of large blue eyes looking down at him. With a yelp of surprise, he quickly sat up, knocking the unfortunate owner of said eyes to the floor with a muffled thump. Rubbing his eyes quickly to make himself more alert, Harry looked over the edge of his bed and spotted the poor creature lying on the floor, a look of terror on her face.

“ I’m sorry, Master Potter, Sir, I didn’t mean to surprise you,” she said frantically, wringing her hands and looking around the room for an exit.

“ It’s quite alright,” Harry said, still trying to wake up properly. The creature reminded Harry strongly of his friend, Dobby. He had the same mannerisms, and the same sense of subservience as the being in front of him. This Ash’ren, for that is what she was, was strikingly similar to a house elf. The same long ears protruded from her head, and she was avoiding eye contact as much as possible. While taller than the elves of Harry’s time, and with a slightly blue skin tone and the presence of hair, the creature was definitely a relative of the house elf.

“ What are you doing here?” Harry finally asked when he was awake enough to carry on a conversation.

“ I was sent by the grand masters,” the Ash’ren replied in elven, “ They asked me to tell Master Potter that the boat is ready.”

“ That’s great!” Harry replied with a grin, causing the Ash’ren to become nervous, thinking she was in for some punishment.

“ When Master Potter is ready, the grand masters request your presence in the council chamber,” she said quickly, glancing longingly at the exit. A frown creased Harry’s forehead as he took in his guest’s behaviour.

“ You don’t need to be afraid of me, you know. I’m not your master, and I’m certainly not going to hurt you,” he explained. Unfortunately, the Ash’ren seemed to become even more agitated.

“ Master Potter is kind, but he should not be speaking to me like this,” she explained.

“ Like what?” Harry asked, knowing how his guest would answer.

“ Like an equal, Master Potter,” she replied, head bowed.

Harry had a sudden flashback of seven and a half years previously, just before he started his second year at Hogwarts. Dobby had said the exact same thing to him then. Looking at this Ash'ren, he felt a sudden desire to do something drastic. Intellectually, he knew she shouldn't mess around with the timeline, but the way the creature was treated by her masters was something that didn't sit well with Harry. He knew, of course, that house elves in his own time were no better off, but they had Hermione to campaign for them. The Ash'ren had no-one. Coming to a decision, he smiled at the blue being.

“ What's your name?” he asked.

The Ash'ren looked shocked, and lowered her eyes.

“ My mistress calls me Cle'alindur,” she said.

“ Cle'alindur?” Harry repeated with a frown, “ Doesn't that mean 'servant of Cle'ali'?”

“ Yes, Master Potter, Mistress Cle'ali is of the council.”

“ Is she now,” Harry muttered to himself, “ Do you have a real name? One that isn't a sign of your enslavement?”

“ We must not speak of such things!” the creature yelped in alarm, becoming quite distressed.

“ Don't worry,” Harry placated, “ I won't tell anyone if you don't want me to.”

The Ash'ren bounced up and down on the spot, tugging at her ears. When she realised that Harry was waiting for an answer, she recoiled slightly, raising her hands in front of her face, as if to protect herself from blows to the head.

“ My Ash’re name is Shanti Timea.”

“ So you’re called Shanti?” Harry confirmed.

“ Shanti is my family name, Master Potter. My given name is Timea.”

Harry nodded his head in understanding, accepting this cultural custom. Looking at the cowering being, he spoke softly.

“ Timea, calm down, I mean you no harm. Please don’t be frightened.”

“ I am sorry, Master Potter, but Mistress punishes me for speaking out of turn,” she replied shakily.

“ Why don’t the Ash’re fight back against the elves? Or even just leave and resettle somewhere else?” Harry asked in curiosity.

“ We could never do that,” Timea said sadly, “ When we were conquered, the elves bound our magic to serve them. Even if we wanted to leave, we are bound to serve our masters until we die. There is no escaping it.”

“ You could...” Harry began, but was cut off by a shaking Timea, who was looking decidedly disturbed at the turn of the conversation.

“ Please speak of such things no more, Master Potter. When you are ready, I will take you to the village. The grand masters are waiting.”

“ I’ll be out in a minute, just let me get dressed and wake my wife,” Harry said.

With a quick bob of her head, Timea exited the tent and left Harry to prepare for his meeting with the elven council.

Twenty minutes later, Harry, Ginny, Severus and Myleidi were following Timea down the winding path to the elven village. Ginny was a little apprehensive about the meeting, as she’d been having a bad feeling about it all morning.

“ Harry,” she whispered to her husband, “ Are you sure this is a good idea? My spider sense is tingling.”

Harry gave her a funny look, frowning a little.

“ Where did you pick that up from?” he asked in confusion. Ginny blushed.

“ Muggle studies in third year. We had to do a comparison between Muggle and wizarding comics.”

Harry just nodded his head slowly, deciding not to comment further. He did take her warning about the upcoming meeting the heart, though. He knew better than to question Ginny’s Seer abilities.

Before they knew it, the group was emerging from the forest and heading into the elven village. Timea started nervously pulling on her ears, gaining her pitying look from Myleidi and Ginny, and a calculating look from Harry. This didn’t go unnoticed by Severus, who moved next to Harry and leaned close to his ear.

“ What are you plotting, Potter,” he whispered, a smirk evident in his voice.

“ What makes you think I’m plotting something, Sev?” Harry asked, twisting his features into his best innocent look.

“ That look won’t work on me, Harry, I’ve known you too long. What are you planning? Does it have something to do with the Ash’re?”

“ Sev, you know I would never interfere with the timeline like that!” Harry said in mock outrage, a twinkle appearing in his eyes. Severus gave him a funny look.

“ Stop that twinkling, you look like Dumbledore!” he protested lightly, a smile playing around his eyes. Harry gave him a brief grin.

“ Well, if it helps any, I am plotting, and the Headmaster and I happen to be in complete agreement.”

“ Sometimes I forget the old coot is still with us,” Sev muttered to himself, “ And I’m still waiting for you to tell me what you’re up to.”

“ Now, Severus you should know better than to ask me that. You know that the surprise is always sweeter when mixed with a healthy dose of curiosity.”

Severus rolled his eyes and dropped the subject, knowing he wasn't going to get anything out of the tight lipped youth. With a sigh he dropped behind the Boy-Who-Lived to talk to Myleidi.

The council chamber was exactly as it had been the last time the time travellers were there. The same stuffy looking elves sat in the same intricately carved chairs, and the same little Ash'ren were scurrying about cleaning the room and bringing refreshments. Timea soon ran off to join them, bringing a snooty looking she-elf a pot of herbal tea. Harry and Myleidi stepped forward and performed the same elven greetings as last time.

“ Honoured Elders, we have come as requested,” Harry intoned, linking his mind with Myleidi's temporarily to borrow her language.

“ I wish I could say it is a pleasure to see you again, heathen, but that would be a lie,” the sour looking she-elf that Timea was serving replied haughtily. Harry assumed this must be Cle'ali, Timea's Mistress.

“ I assure you, madam, I am just as pleased to see you as you are to see me,” Harry responded with a sneer. Myleidi gave him a shocked look, but Harry ignored her, refusing to break eye contact with the Elder.

“ Such audacity is outrageous!” a very old looking elf yelled from a few seats across, “ A heathen has no place speaking to a Child of Light in such a manner!”

“ Good sir, I may be what you class as a heathen, but I am not prepared to take abuse from anyone,” Harry snarled, his temper rising. He needed to finish the transaction quickly before he became too angry at the arrogance of these elves.

“ May we please complete the trade now,” Myleidi pleaded quietly to her human friend. Harry looked at her anxious face and calmed down slightly. He knew she was uncomfortable among these people, and didn’t want to prolong the experience.

“ Our boat is ready?” Harry asked the council, changing the subject.

“ It was been refurbished, yes,” Cle’ali, who seemed to be the spokeself, said, “ We require only that you uphold your end of the bargain.”

“ I have compiled a list of enchantments, incantations and potions that will improve your healing and fishing skills,” Harry responded, “ Once ownership of the boat has been transferred to me via an unbreakable magical contract, I will hand it over and explain the spells. Are we in agreement?”

The Elders conversed quietly for a few minutes before finally coming to a decision.

“ We accept your terms,” the youngest of the group replied, “ One of our slaves will show you to the boat, and upon your return the contracts will be signed.”

Taking that as a dismissal, the group quickly left the council chamber, following behind a scurrying Timea once more. When they reached the harbour, all four looked up at the magnificent ship in front of them. It was large, big enough to carry a couple of hundred warrior elves. The entire structure was made out of wood, with a large mast in the middle. A huge pale green sail hung from the mast, shining brightly in the November sunlight. The time travellers were in awe of the structure. When they had been promised a refurbished warship, they had not been expecting anything on this scale. The elves must have really wanted the magical knowledge. Harry turned to his wife, a smile playing around his lips.

“ It’s perfect,” he said.

“ Yes, a little too perfect,” Ginny replied, giving Harry a pointed look. The scarred man gave a slight frown, looking back at the boat. Letting his magical senses extent, he scanned the ship for any anomalies.

Just as he was about to give up, he noticed the bottom of the boat below the waterline had been weakened. Waving his hand slightly, he removed layer upon layer of charms designed to cover up all evidence of the tampering. Once they were all stripped away, he discovered a delayed spell placed within the wood, designed to cause the bottom of the boat to crumble once it was over water of a certain depth. Anger building up in him, he removed the charm, and set about using wandless magic to reinforce the structure of the boat. Sev and Ginny, realising what he was doing, quickly joined him. Layer upon layer of wards, protection spells and strengthening spells were placed on the boat. Timea was watching the group in awe and curiosity as they waved their hands in intricate patterns in the air. She could feel the magic in the air, and knew they were performing spells. She didn't say anything, though, knowing it was not her place to comment. She began thinking, though, that these strangers were a lot more powerful than her elven masters.

"I think that will do," Harry said eventually, casting one last spell that would alert him to any furthering tampering from the elves.

"When shall we set sail?" Ginny asked.

"As soon as possible, I think," Harry said, "Could you transform into your animagus form and fly back to camp? Tell them to start packing. We'll leave as soon as I've finished the transaction with the elves."

"Alright, I'll go straight back. Are you going to say anything about the sabotage?" she asked her husband. Harry gave her a wink and smirked. Sev smirked as well, recognising the look of a Marauder planning a particularly nasty prank.

"I'm sure I'll come up with something," he said slyly, "Just bring the rest of the group to the harbour when you're packed and start loading everything onto the boat."

"Ok, see you soon," Ginny said, kissing Harry quickly and changing into a pelican, before flying off in the direction of the forest.

"Are you two ready to face our 'friends'?" Harry asked Sev and Myleidi.

“ I’m looking forward to it,” Severus said with a malicious sneer.

“ Well, I suppose it’s adequate,” Harry said to the Elven Elders once the group had returned to the council chamber. The looks on the elves’ faces was priceless, and Harry took sadistic pleasure in insulting their craftsmanship. One thing about elves was that they were very proud of their culture and creations, and to class something of theirs as only adequate was a huge insult.

“ Adequate!” one Elder spluttered, his face turning an interesting shade of purple, “ That is elven craftsmanship at its finest! How dare a heather savage...”

“ Oh, get over yourself,” Harry snapped, “ The boat’s fine. Let’s get this over with. I, for one, will be glad when our business is complete.”

“ As will we, let me assure you,” Cle’ali sneered, “ We have drawn up a draft of the contract. Please sign on the line.”

The elderly she-elf held out a long piece of parchment and a quill to Harry. The Boy-Who-Lived snatched the contract out of her hand, and began to read it carefully.

“ What are you doing!” one of the Elders yelled, standing up and looking at Harry agog.

“ Reading the contract. I’m not about to sign something I’ve not read. I’m not stupid,” Harry said sarcastically.

“ But...” the elf began, but was cut off by an annoyed looking Harry.

“ And I think it’s a good thing I am reading this. I refuse to sign this.”

“ You cannot refuse,” Cle’ali stated, “ You agreed to a trade, and we have held up out end of the transaction. You cannot back out now.”

“ I agreed to trade some magical knowledge for a boat, not have my magical powers bound and give the elven prince my wife! I’m surprised you didn’t ask for my firstborn as well!” Harry growled, his eyes starting to glow softly. Sev and Myleidi took several steps back, knowing their friend was a hairsbreadth away from exploding.

“ So you don’t agree to the terms?” Cle’ali asked.

“ No. I’ll tell you what, give me ten minutes and I’ll write a new draft. Something I’m sure will be more agreeable to both parties.”

Storming from the room, Harry left an amused Severus and a shocked Myleidi standing in the council chamber.

“ You’re in for it now,” Sev said to the elves, who stared at him blankly, before turning around and following his friend out of the door.

“ Bloody ridiculous, treacherous, pointy eared bastards!” Harry was muttering to himself as he took a heavily revised contract back to the council. This time, it was set out simply, stating that the time travellers were given the rights of ownership for the boat, as well as being granted access to the harbour for the rest of the day to give them the chance to pack and leave. The elves would receive the list of spells Harry had compiled, and would also never be contacted again by the time travellers.

“ Want to bond my magic do they,” he grumbled to himself as he slammed through the main doors, startling the elves inside. Harry made no move to carry out the formal greetings, instead stalking up to the Elders and thrusting a signed contract at one of the elves. The Elder took it and scanned it, a frown appearing on his forehead. Realising it was the best they were going to get, though, he took out a quill and signed the contract, passing it on to the next elf to sign. Once they had all signed the parchment, it rolled itself up and disappeared with a soft pop.

“ Well, I believe that concludes our business,” Harry said, handing over the list of spells and potions, a hint of a smile gracing his lips. As he walked out of the council chamber and towards his new boat, he let a soft chuckle escape.

“ What did you do?” Glen asked, coming up behind his father.

“ What makes you think I’ve done something?” Harry asked.

“ I can tell, Dad. You have that mischievous look in your eyes. Harry blushed slightly, before whispering in his son’s ear.

“ Let’s just say that the elves will have a surprise waiting for them when they use those spells.”

“ But I thought you signed a magical contract with them,” Glen said, “ Those can’t be broken.”

“ No, they can’t. I gave them exactly what I said I would. Spells and potions to improve their medicine and fishing.”

“ But...”

Harry looked slightly sheepish.

“ But when they use the medical magic, it will cure their ailments, with the unfortunate side effect of giving them an extremely irritating rash, in a most inconvenient place,” Harry admitted.

“ And...” Glen said, knowing there was more to it than that.

“ And when they use the fishing spell, it will cause fish to jump out of the sea and onto the land, making them easier to catch. What they don’t know is that for a week after they use the spell, the fish will follow them wherever they do, hitting them on the back of the head periodically.”

“ Dad, you didn’t!” Glen exclaimed, a chuckle escaping.

“ Knowing your father, I’m sure he did,” Sirius said, coming up behind the pair, “ He gets it from James. He has Marauder blood in his veins.”

“ Yes, Siri, and I believe James got it from Eustace, who in turn got it from Harry,” Remus added, joining the conversation. Sirius gave him an odd look, trying to work out what the werewolf was trying to say. His eyes widened when he realised what Remus was saying, and he rolled his eyes slightly.

“ You know Moony, I still have trouble getting my head around this whole time travel thing,” he said. The two friends wandered off, arguing as usual. Harry led Glen over to the boat, where the rest of the time travellers were waiting.

“ Are we all set?” he asked, eagerly.

“ As far as we can tell,” Hermione told him, “ The boat’s loaded, we just need to set sail.”

“ I suppose we should get going, while the weather’s good. The sooner we get out of here, the better. We can unpack on the way,” Ron said.

“ Yes, get on the boat, I’ll be there in a minute,” Harry said, wandering off to the middle of the village. The others did as he said, before turning to see what the Boy-Who-Lived was doing. Harry was standing with his arms up, casting a complicated looking spell. When he returned, Hermione came up beside him.

“ What was that you were doing?” she asked, as the boat started to move out of the harbour. Harry gave her a small, knowing smile.

“ Lets just say that the elves will be getting a shock when they hand the Ash’reen their laundry.”

Chapter Twelve – Crossing the Sea

“ You’re joking,” Hermione gasped, a horrified look on her face, “ That’s interfering with the timeline!”

“ Not really,” Harry responded with a shrug, “ I didn’t free the slaves, I just gave them some options.”

“ But you messed around with history! It could have consequences!” Hermione raged, her face turning an interesting shade of magenta.

“ Yes, it does have consequences,” Harry said with a sharp edge to his voice, “ In about ten thousand years, Dobby will be freed from his miserable existence with the Malfoys!”

“ And Winky will become an alcoholic!”

“ But how many other house elves will be saved from abusive masters in the meantime!”

“ Probably fewer than will have nervous breakdowns from having to leave masters they love!”

“ Hermione, this is a pointless argument,” Harry said, deflating, “ What happened to S.P.E.W?”

Hermione fell silent, a conflicted look on her face. Harry could tell her inner sense of morality was fighting with her common sense. Morally, she felt obliged to help the house elves in any way she could, meaning freedom from their wizarding masters. However, intellectually, she didn’t want to interfere with the timeline. It was an internal debate she could never win.

“ So, have you chosen a room yet?” she eventually asked, deciding to drop the subject of the Ash’ren for now.

“ I’ve not really seen them,” Harry said, moving over to the trap door leading down to the bowels of the ship, “ I suppose I’d better find Ginny so we can choose one.”

Once he was down the wooden ladder, he found himself in a long corridor. The ladder went further down, but he knew that below him was the storage area of the ship, which they would eventually fill with supplies they gathered along the way. Making his way down the corridor, he saw room after identical room, each small with six bunks, three against each wall. They were obviously meant to house the warriors on the way to battle. As he went, he mentally planned some modifications he could make to the floor, making it more comfortable for habitation. He would have to be careful not to compromise the structural integrity of the whole boat, but he thought it could be done.

After perusing the identical rooms and finding none out of the ordinary, Harry made his way back up to the deck to see how far out of the harbour they were. As he ascended the ladder, he could hear a loud argument. Rolling his eyes, he quickened his pace and emerged from the trap door to a scene of chaos. Hermione and Ginny were arguing about how to decorate the interior of the ship, Glen and Ron were heatedly debating defences the ship needed, and Sirius and Severus were practically punching each other. Deeming that the situation with the older men was the most serious, Harry made his way over to a rather frazzled looking Remus, who seemed ready to jump out of the nearest porthole.

“What’s going on this time?” Harry asked, with a long suffering sigh.

“They realised that neither of them can sail a boat, and they’re blaming each other for their shortcomings.”

“What a surprise,” Harry muttered, before lazily casting *Impedimenta* at each of his friends.

“Right, you two, I have had about enough of this. What’s the issue here?” he demanded glaring first at his godfather and then at his best friend. They both had the good sense to look sheepish. Releasing them from the jinx, Harry crossed his arms and tapped his foot, waiting for an answer. The two shot glares at each other before simultaneously pointing at each other and yelling, “It was his fault!”

Harry rolled his eyes and shot a look at Remus.

“Alright, what were you arguing about? Severus?”

“ The mutt can’t sail a boat, and he seems to think it’s my fault,” Severus growled, his arms crossed.

“ What! Like Hell! The greasy git’s the one who can’t sail a boat! I could if I wanted to!” Sirius exclaimed.

“ Of course, Black. I’m sure with you at the helm, we’ll sink in no time.”

“ At least I’m not scared of water. I seem to remember you refused to get in the boat at the start of our first year. Said something about the giant squid wanting to eat you.”

“ As if! I knew you had a miniscule brain, Black, but I didn’t realise you were delusional.”

“ Delusional! This from the person who kissed the Dark Lord’s stinking feet for most of his adult life!”

“ That’s as may be, but at least Dumbledore trusted me enough to let me into the Order. I seem to recall, after you attempted to murder me, it took a long time for you to regain the headmaster’s trust.”

“ He only trusted you because of Harry! No-one would ever trust a stinking Slytherin without a weighty character reference.”

“ As I recall, Harry was a ‘stinking Slytherin’ at the time!”

“ But that’s only because it was the only House he hadn’t been in! He was a Gryffindor first!”

“ But the Sorting Hat wanted to put him in Slytherin in his first year. He had to beg it to put him in Gryffindor.”

“ You lying, treacherous little Death Eater!” Sirius screamed, lunging at Severus once again. Harry, who had been watching the pair wordlessly, stunned them both before they could damage each other further.

“ Put them in one of the rooms, will you, please, Remus,” he asked the werewolf wearily, before wandering off to see what the others were doing.

“ Are you sure that’s wise?” Remus asked.

“ Lock them in and put up a silencing charm,” Harry called over his shoulder, “ With any luck, they’ll kill each other.”

The rest of the day, what little was left of it, was spent trying to organise the rooms. Hermione and Ginny had come to an agreement about the decorating, deciding that the communal areas should be painted in pure white and lemon. The bedrooms would be decorated according to individual taste, so everyone would at least be happy with their personal space.

By the time the sun set, the whole floor had been converted into a comfortable apartment. Dampening charms had been placed on the whole level, to prevent the residents feeling the swaying of the ship. Eight spacious bedrooms had been created, and with the couples sharing it left one free in case they had any guests. Four of the bedrooms were located at each end of the ship, with the central area split into a kitchen, living room, library and study. Each of the two sets of bedrooms had a large bathroom to share.

For obvious reasons, Severus and Sirius had been given rooms at opposite ends of the ship. Harry didn’t want to be woken up in the middle of the night to the sound of arguing. Merlin forbid they have rooms which shared a wall. By dinner time, everyone had chosen their rooms, and had settled in as best they could. Ginny and Hermione had taken over the kitchen, preparing a rich soup from some rabbits they had caught that morning. When it was ready the whole group seated themselves around a large round dining table.

“ This is really good,” Glen commented, helping himself to seconds.

“ We did the best with what we had,” Ginny said, blushing slightly. She had never been the best cook, despite her mother’s best efforts to teach her. She just didn’t have the patience to prepare complicated meals.

“ We really need to see about some supplies,” Ron mentioned, shoveling the food into his mouth. Hermione shot him an admonishing look.

“ Ron, don’t speak with your mouth full,” she said with a scowl. Ron just glared back.

“ We should stop soon and see if we can trade,” Remus suggested, “ I’m sure not all of the natives are as hostile as the Marine Elves were.”

“ Well, I doubt we’d get a warm welcome anywhere,” Glen said, “ We’re in an inhospitable environment with primitive peoples. If I remember my history classes correctly, they’re not used to outsiders. Just look at the trouble we had with the Elementals. We certainly don’t want a repeat of that incident.”

“ Glen has a point,” Remus agreed, “ We can’t count on people helping us.”

“ Which kind of makes this whole trip a little pointless, then, doesn’t it?” Sirius grumbled, “ I mean, if everyone’s so primitive and hostile, why are we going to all this trouble to meet up with them?”

“ The Egyptians are different,” Ron defended, “ Harry said we’d be able to communicate with them, and stay there. Right, mate?”

Harry looked at his best friend like a deer caught in headlights. The rest of the group were all watching him intently, waiting for his response. After an uncomfortable few minutes, he let out a long sigh.

“ I doubt they’ll be friendly. As I mentioned before, they’re not likely to welcome us with open arms. As we have a means of communicating with them, we should be able to stop them from killing us on sight...”

“ What! Harry, tell me you’re joking,” Ron yelled, paling considerably, “ You said they were a sure bet!”

“ No I didn’t, you’re twisting my words,” Harry replied with a scowl, “ I said they were our best bet, not a sure bet. They’re wizards, so they’re more likely to respond positively to us than other beings. I can

talk to them, which is a plus. And you have to remember that they're the most advanced civilisation around at this time. They'll be around when we change times as well, so we're guaranteed not to be stuck in the middle of nowhere again, like we were this time. I don't know about you, but I don't want to spend the next few years living in a tent in the middle of a forest."

Slowly the others nodded their agreement. Egypt was still their best option, even though they didn't know what they'd be facing when they got there. In the meantime, they would have to find some food source, as they were fast nearing the open sea, where stopping for supplies would no longer be an option.

A couple of days later, the opportunity to find some food stores finally presented itself. The sighting of civilisation had been completely by chance, something all of the crew was grateful for. It had been Glenadade who, while on lookout duty, had spotted a curious sight above the nearby coastline. They had stayed close to the shore in the hopes of seeing some sign of life, and it seemed their measures had been effective. The land to their right was a pale brown, covered in short, parched grass, and with the odd olive tree here and there. Rising from the otherwise plain ground was a curious sight. Plumes of smoke escaped from small holes in the ground, rising high above the landscape. In an area with a lot of volcanic activity, this was not an uncommon sight, but fortunately Glenadade recognised it for what it was.

"Dad!", he shouted down from his perch on the mast. Harry, who had been working on the rigging below him, looked up sharply at his son's excited voice.

"What is it, Glen?" he asked.

"Look at the land! I think we've found a Dwarf colony!"

Harry looked across immediately, taking in what his son had spotted. A large grin spread across his features and he beamed at Glen.

"Great work, Glen. I'll let the others know."

That said, Harry quickly leapt down from the mast onto the deck below, making his way to a large metal bell. It was made of an elven alloy and gleamed in the afternoon sun. Reaching up, Harry rang the bell as loud as he could, and waited for the rest of the group to appear. It had been decided early on that the bell, used by the elves to signal an enemy approach or attack, would be ideal as a way of calling everyone together if something important happened. Sure enough, the rest of the time travellers soon started appearing from various areas of the ship, where they had all been engaged in their own tasks. The initial looks of alarm on most of their faces soon disappeared when they saw Harry's large grin.

"What's happened, mate?" Ron asked when he saw the expression on his best friend's face.

"I think Glen may have found something," he told them, "You see the plumes of smoke over there?"

Harry pointed over the bow of the ship at the wisps on the landscape. Sirius and Ron had somewhat puzzled looks on their faces, but Hermione immediately brightened.

"A Dwarf colony! That's just what we need!" she said excitedly.

"Dwarf colony? Where?" Ron asked, confused, "All I see is smoke."

"Those are the vent holes. The colony is underground," she explained.

"Dwarves are known for their forging skills," Remus added, "They have deep, expansive mines, with their settlements centred around their forges. The vent holes are created to let out the steam from the metal cooling process."

"And how do you know it's not just a volcano?" Sirius asked.

"Because of the arrangement of the vents, you flea bitten mutt," Severus growled. Sirius narrowed his eyes as the Potions Master, and was about to say something when Harry quickly intervened.

“ Stop, now, before you even start!” he snapped. The pair had the grace to look sheepish.

“ How receptive do you think they’ll be to visitors?” Glen asked as he joined the group on the deck.

“ They should be reasonably friendly,” Hermione said, “ Dwarves usually are. At least they are in our time.”

“ Dwarf – they the small ones?” Myleidi asked, a small frown marring her brow.

“ Yes, small ones with long beards. They work with metal,” Severus explained to her, helping her with the new English word.

“ My people, we know of them,” She said, shyly, “ We trade. Can speak their tongue.”

“ That’s great!” Ron exclaimed, “ I knew there was a reason we brought her along.”

Hermione deemed to whack him over the head for that comment, an outraged look on her face. The rest of the group just laughed at their antics.

“ I guess we’d better lower the anchor, then,” Remus said, “ It looks like we’ll be visiting the Dwarves.”

As soon as the small rowboat reached the shore, Harry leapt out and guided it onto the black, volcanic beach. Looking back at the anchored ship not far away, he waved to Sirius, who was waiting for a signal that the group had arrived safely. That done, the young vampire helped his elven friend out of the boat and onto the beach, watching Glen do the same for Ginny. They had decided not to send a large delegation to the Dwarves, as they didn’t know what sort of a reception they would get. After all, the Dwarves in their own time may be friendly, but these Dwarves were an unknown quantity.

Once the boat was secured on the beach, the small group headed for the rising smoke, the nearest outlet not being very far away. When

they reached it, however, they looked down the large, smooth hole in confusion.

“ How do we get down there?” Glen asked, looking all around for some kind of entry to the Dwarf settlement.

“ Well, one thing’s for sure, we won’t be climbing down the hole,” Ginny replied, “ If the steam didn’t scorch us, the sides would ensure we fell to our deaths. We’ll have to try and find another way in. There must be one.”

“ There’s sure to be an entry, but no doubt it will be well concealed. The Dwarves of our own time are more than a little paranoid, so I can only imagine these ones being worse,” Harry added, a frown marring his brow. Much to his chagrin, he didn’t know very much about Dwarves. He knew as much as any Hogwarts graduate would, but he had never taken the time to study them as a society. There had always been more important things on his mind, such as defensive and offensive magic.

For the next twenty minutes, the four searched the ground in the area for an entry point, finding nothing but the vent holes and a barren landscape. Close to giving up, Glen dropped heavily to the ground and put his head in his hands.

“ This is useless,” he muttered to himself, before punching the ground to his right in a bout of frustration. Much to his amazement, and a little concern, he felt the ground beneath him begin to tremble.

“ Erm, Dad!” he yelled, as the shaking became more pronounced and the small shards of rock around him started to bounce up and down.

At the call from Glen, the other three had quickly made their way in his direction, hoping he had found something. They could feel the earth moving beneath their feet, and decided to move a little more quickly. When they reached Glen’s position, they immediately noticed his pale face and fearful eyes, looking at something off to one side. Following his line of sight, they spotted what it must have been he was looking at.

Out of the ground, a large boulder was rapidly erupting. When it finally came to a stop, the ground ceased its shaking, and the group cautiously walked towards it. At its final height, it came up to the middle of Harry's chest. It was quite broad, as well as deep. On the front, strange markings appeared in lines.

"I'm guessing I found our way in," Glen said with a nervous laugh.

"I'd say you did," Ginny agreed, peering closely at the markings, "I think it's Dwarven writing, but I can't read it. Any ideas?"

"I can read," Myleidi said, squinting her eyes slightly to read the tiny script, "It is being story of Dwarf legend. But not right."

"What do you mean, not right?" Harry asked her in elvish. He didn't want to others to feel left out, but on the other hand he didn't want to have to wait for Myleidi to try and express herself in English.

"I'm not sure," she explained to him, "My people know of the small ones, and we have been known to trade with them in the past, but I am unfamiliar with much of their culture. As trading partners, we learn their tongue at a young age, but I know little about their history. I can read the writing, though. It tells of Growalda, a great queen of their mines, who battled the dragon Eliswith. The story follows her journey to the dragon's lair, where she found a great treasure of metals and ores. Her adventures along the way are recorded meticulously. However, it's not quite right."

"Not right how?"

"The story, it's not in the right order."

"How can you tell?" Harry asked, confused.

"Well, it starts at the top, here," she said, pointing to the first line of text, "And it tells of how she travelled through the Mines of Hess, a dangerous region controlled by the hags. It then describes the dragon Eliswith and his lair, in great detail. After that, she leaves her home in search of a great treasure. The story continues in such a disjointed manner. It's wrong."

“ But that doesn’t make sense,” Harry agreed, “ Why write a historical record with the story in the wrong order. What would be the point?”

“ Does anyone care to fill us in,” Ginny interrupted, impatiently. She had watched the conversation between the pair in growing frustration. She understood the need for rapid communication, but was starting to feel rather left out. Harry gave her an apologetic look and quickly translated the gist of the conversation.

“ So, it’s in the wrong order, and we suspect this is the entrance to the Dwarven mines?” Glen summarised.

“ That’s about the measure of it, yes,” his father agreed.

“ Then it’s obviously a test,” the ancient boy concluded, “ The Dwarves won’t want just anyone wandering into their domain, so they put this...riddle, I suppose you would call it...at the entrance to control who could and couldn’t get in. You probably have to rearrange the story and put it in the right order. Only someone familiar with their history would know the right combination.”

The other three mulled over Glen’s words, nodding as they reached their own conclusions. His explanation was sound, and it would make sense to use something so imbedded in their culture to protect them from unfriendly visitors.

“ The question is,” Ginny said, “ How do we know what the right order is? None of us are really familiar with Dwarven culture.”

“ Or maybe a more important question would be if there are any consequences to entering the wrong combination?” Glen asked, “ A failsafe to prevent people simply trying random combinations in the hope of getting the right one.”

“ That’s a good point,” Harry agreed, “ I think the best thing we can do is make a copy of the text and take it back to the ship. Nine heads, after all, are better than four. Hermione might have some valuable input.”

The others nodded their agreement, and with a wave of his hand, Harry conjured a long scroll of parchment. Seconds later he had used a copying spell to fill the scroll with tiny Dwarven text.

“ Let’s head back,” he said, tucking the parchment into his robe pocket, “ The sooner we get started, the sooner we get some food.”

“ This is impossible!” Hermione raged after four hours of working on the story. It had taken the group a good while to get the text translated. A few translation charms from their book had been helpful, as the Dwarven language hadn’t evolved much in the last ten thousand years, but there were still some rather large gaps where the charms had encountered archaic terms.

“ Have some patience, ‘Mione,” Ron soothed, rubbing small circles on her back, “ I thought you were usually the calm and logical one!”

“ I am,” she sighed, “ But this is near impossible. Without knowing the mythology, we have no way of knowing the correct sequence of events. Some of it’s obvious, but other parts could go anywhere!”

“ Well, your best guess will have to do. I have confidence in you.”

“ That’s all well and good, Ron, but I don’t have confidence in myself,” she said.

“ You should,” he vehemently objected, “ Look at all the times you got us out of a tight spot. You’re the brightest witch of our age, if anyone can give us a possible solution, it’s you!”

Hermione spared her boyfriend a small smile and a light kiss.

“ You can be really sweet when you want to be, Ronald Weasley.”

Hermione spent the rest of the day working on the problem of the Dwarven myth. Valuable input from Remus, Severus and Glen gave her some insights into Dwarven culture, and by nightfall she had come up with the most logical order of the story. Calling everyone into the dining room, she prepared go present her findings.

“ Told you you would get there in the end,” Ron piped up when she’d finished explaining her reasoning and suggested story order.

“ You did, Ron, thank you,” she said with a blush.

“ So, we have a way in,” Severus commented, “ Are we going to approach them tomorrow morning?”

“ I’d say so, Sev,” Harry agreed, “ We want to get food as soon as possible so we can be on our way. I suggest Ginny, Glen, Myleidi and I go first thing in the morning and see what we can do. Any objections?”

The silence that followed was all the confirmation Harry needed. Closing the meeting and bidding each other good night, the group dispersed to have a decent night’s sleep. The next day would be trying, as they didn’t know what sort of reception they would be getting from the Dwarves.

The following morning found Glen, Ginny, Harry and Myleidi making their way back towards the Dwarven vents. When they reached the site from the day before, they looked at the barren landscape in concern.

“ Can anyone remember where the entrance was?” Ginny asked, looking for the protruding rock.

“ It must have disappeared back into the ground,” Glen commented, “ I’m not sure where it was. I think it was over near that tree.”

Everyone followed where Glen was pointing and saw a clump of small trees.

“ Are you sure?” Harry asked, “ I thought it was more to the right.”

The next twenty minutes was spent kicking the ground in various places, trying to find the entrance once again. Finally, Myleidi let out a triumphant cry, alerting the others to her discovery. When they made their way over to her, they could see the dust settling around the newly risen stone entrance.

“ I find,” she said triumphantly, a grin on her face.

“ Well done, Myleidi,” Ginny said, returning the smile.

“ All we have to do now is input the correct sequence,” Glen said, pulling a piece of parchment out of his robe pocket and unfolding it. Passing it to his father, he watched as he looked at the parchment, pressing his hands on the relevant pieces of text. Every time Harry touched a section, the etchings would light up. When he was finished, the text disappeared in a bright flash of light.

“ Did we do it wrong?” Ginny asked, frowning.

“ I hope not,” Glen said as the ground beneath their feet began to rumble and vibrate. The quartet stepped back several paces as the stone entrance split open with a large booming crack. A winding staircase appeared through the hole, disappearing into the ground.

“ Shall we go, then?” Harry asked, raising his hand and casing a quick Lumos. The others nodded and followed the vampire into the hole. It made sense to let Harry go first. After all, he had vampire eyesight, and could see in the dark a lot better than the rest of them. As they made their way down the passage, they grumbled endlessly about the height. Dwarves, of course, were rather shorter than the average human or elf, meaning the group had to stoop. After ten minutes, their backs were starting to ache.

“ Are we nearly there yet, Dad?” Glen asked.

“ I can see a faint red glow up ahead, so I don’t think it’s too much farther,” he replied.

Sure enough, a few minutes later, the passage emptied out into a large cavern. The heat from the furnaces scorched the newcomers, making their eyes water and their skin sting. It didn’t take long for their group to be noticed, and a chorus of guttural voices started shouting out to each others. Ginny managed to pry her eyes open and saw three important looking Dwarves heading in their direction. With a great deal of effort, she waved her hand, creating a heat barrier around their group. Immediately, the others recovered, blinking their eyes and rubbing their skin.

“ Thanks, Gin,” her husband said, giving her a brief one armed hug, before turning towards the newcomers.

“ Myleidi, do you think you could talk to them,” he asked the elf in elven.

“ I hope so,” she replied, before turning to the three Dwarves and speaking to them in the same guttural tones as they had heard before. The Dwarves seemed surprised when she spoke to them, but were soon nodding and gesturing for the group to follow them.

They were led into what appeared to be a conference room. The ceiling was high, much to the humans’ relief, and there was a large, round stone table in the centre of the room. Their hosts led them to the table and gestured for them to take a seat. Once everyone was comfortable, Myleidi began to rapidly explain their situation and their need for food supplies. The Dwarves listened quietly, nodding occasionally. Eventually Myleidi fell silent, and the Dwarves had a hushed conversation amongst themselves. The elf turned to her companions, also whispering.

“ They ask, what we to them give.”

“ We don’t have much to trade with,” Glen pointed out, “ I know for a fact that Dwarves don’t trade knowledge or magic. They only trade in material goods.”

“ You’re right, we don’t have much to trade. We have our weapons, but we can’t trade those, and we have our books, which will be useless to them,” Ginny mused, “ The only thing we have of real material value is our boat, but that’s out of the question. Anyway, Dwarves don’t cross water, so they would have no need for it.”

“ I think our best bet is to see what they want and try to work around that. It’s all we can do,” Harry concluded.

The group fell silent and waited for their hosts to finish their discussion. When the short beings seemed to come to a conclusion, they began speaking with Myleidi once again. The conversation was brief, and Myleidi had a troubled look on her face.

“ They want know, we have stones of red and white,” she said with a frown, unsure of the English words.

“ Red and white?” Glen asked.

“ Red and white,” she confirmed, “ Shine, not seen much.”

“ Rubies and diamonds,” Harry concluded, “ They’ll be after precious stones for their metal work.

“ But we don’t have any,” Ginny pointed out, “ Is there anything else they would trade for?”

“ I ask,” Myleidi replied.

The negotiations continued in the same manner for a further three hours. The humans were getting decidedly bored. After the first hour, they had started a telepathic game of ‘I spy’, but that became boring very quickly. After all, there wasn’t much to ‘spy’ in a stone cavern. The games had become increasingly childish as the time passed, and it was during the third round of ‘Anywhere But Here’ that Ginny suddenly sat up straight and began muttering, gaining the attention of everyone in the room. One Dwarf asked Myleidi something, which she quickly translated.

“ He ask, what she do.”

“ I think she’s having a vision,” Harry explained, and moved closer to his wife, ready to hear what she had to say. He didn’t have to wait long.

“ The time of strife approaches,

The enemy rises in the east,

Borne of blood and hate,

To fight those who mine the earth,

For the wealth of Mother Nature,

And those who are her children,

As the new moon dawns,
Let the enemy come,
And the children of the earth shall prevail,
As the new moon dawns.”

Ginny collapsed against Harry, her piece said. The Dwarves were looking at her in awe, rapidly chattering to each other in excited tones. Myleidi also looked rather surprised.

“ What happened?” she asked Harry.

“ She had a vision. She’s quite a powerful Seer, and sometimes makes prophecies. I think this was one of them. Why are the Dwarves so excited?”

“ Seers are rare amongst the Dwarves,” she explained in elven,
“ They feel privileged to be present during the telling of a prophecy. At least I think that’s what they’re saying.”

A couple of minutes later, the Dwarves stopped their discussion and asked Myleidi a question. She quickly translated, becoming rather excited.

“ They want trade,” she said, “ Prophecy for food.”

“ That’s all they want?” Glen asked, surprised.

“ Yes.”

Harry looked up from where he was tending to his unconscious wife.

“ That seems a little strange. They don’t even know what it’s about.”

“ I tell them, say about Dwarves.”

Harry pondered this, thinking over the words of Ginny’s prophecy. The description did seem to fit the Dwarves.

“ How valuable is it to them?” Harry asked, “ If we can get more than food out of them, then that would be great.”

“ I wouldn’t push our luck,” Glen said, “ We don’t want to offend them.”

“ Yes, but if the prophecy’s worth a lot to them, and we don’t ask for much, we won’t gain their respect as trading partners,” Harry pointed out.

“ That’s true,” Glen conceded, “ Myleidi, why don’t you ask them?”

The elf nodded and went back to negotiating. By the time the group left an hour later, they had agreed upon a large supply of food, as well as a chest full of gold coins.

After trading with the Dwarves, the time travellers sailed their boat along the coast to the heel of Italy, following one of their numerous maps. After one and a half weeks of sailing, they finally turned to the open sea and headed for the Greek coast. Crossing the open sea was dangerous, especially with such a primitive boat, and they wanted to stay as close to land as possible. They were making good time, having created a magical wind to fill their sails. The Greek coast didn’t take as long to navigate, and before they knew it they were sailing away from Crete and out across the Mediterranean, nothing but water between them and Egypt.

Just under two weeks before Christmas, Severus spotted a small speck on the horizon. Swinging down from his lookout perch on the mast, he raced to the warning bell, ringing it with all his might. When the rest of the scattered crew came running, asking him what he had seen, an uncharacteristic grin spread across his face.

“ I saw land.”